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# THE DIAL

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## THE DIAL

MARIANNE MOORE  
*Editor*

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*Adviser*

### NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

NUMA PATLAGEAN was born in Bessarabia in 1888. He studied in Geneva for four years; and in Paris, at the Beaux Arts and other schools. Examples of his work—portraits, masks, and sculptures—have been exhibited in New York. His portrait of Oscar Wilde in wood, reproduced as frontispiece to this issue, is here photographed from the clay.

EDWARD GORDON CRAIG was born January 16, 1872. "Actor with Henry Irving from 1889 to 1897, produced some thirteen plays and operas from 1900 onwards," says *The Mask*. "In 1900 was doing in production what was repeated in Germany a few years later." He founded in Florence in 1913, a School for the Art of the Theatre; and as critic, engraver, typographer, editor, producer, it is chiefly for the theatre that he has worked. Author of *Woodcuts and Some Words*, *The Theatre Advancing*, *On the Art of the Theatre*, and other books, he is a member of The Society of Wood Engravers, a member of The Society of Twelve, and is The Editor of *The Mask*, having edited previously *The Page* and *The Marionette*. The festival performance of Ibsen's *Pretenders* at The Royal Theatre Copenhagen last year was given under his direction. At present in Weimar, he is at work upon woodcuts for a special edition of *Hamlet*.

HENRI PEYRE was born in Paris in 1901. The greater part of his early life was spent in the south of France. He then studied in Paris at the Sorbonne and at the Ecole Normale, and for some time in Cambridge, England. He is now teaching French at Bryn Mawr College.

RUTH FITTER was born in England, where she now lives. She has contributed from time to time to *Marsyas* and to *The New Age*. A book of verse by her, *First Poems*, appeared in 1920, succeeded by *First and Second Poems*, 1927.

JOHN DAVENPORT was born in Philadelphia in 1904, and was graduated from Yale in 1926. He has contributed to *The Hound and Horn* an article entitled *Rimbaud and After*.

J. I. N. NEUGAS was born in New Orleans in 1905. He is holder of the fencing championship for southern France and was educated at Yale at the Sorbonne, and at Oxford—Balliol, 1927. He has contributed criticism to various New York papers.

FRANCES HATHAWAY was born in Michigan and received her education at The University of Michigan. She has contributed to *Scribner's* and to other magazines. She lives in Aberdeen, Washington.

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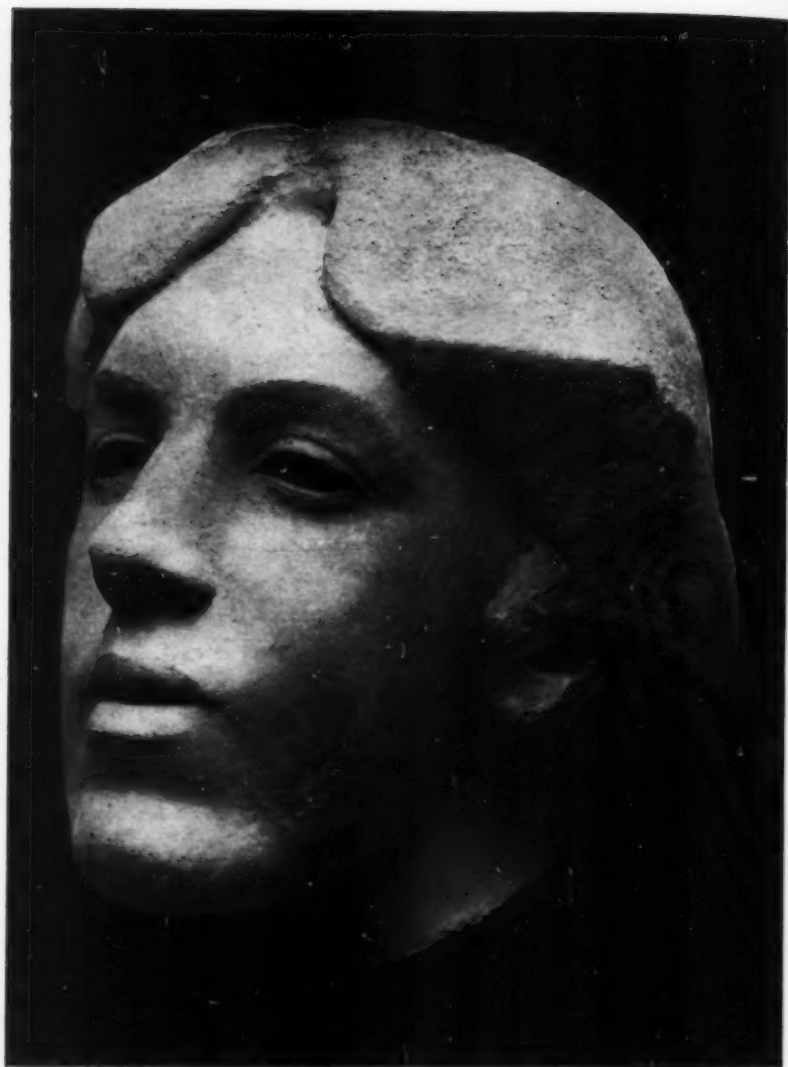
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OSCAR WILDE. BY NUMA PATLAGEAN

# THE DIAL



MAY 1928

## ON SIGNORA ELEONORA DUSE

BY GORDON CRAIG

ONE of the really difficult things for even a professional writer to do seems to be to write well about great actors and actresses.

I find in all my books on actors (and I have some hundreds of them) hardly one which is really worth while.

Yet Edmund Kean, Henry Irving, Talma, Salvini, Ristori, and Sarah Bernhardt were something to write about—one supposes so anyhow.

One supposed this when *in* the Theatre and aware of their presence: we were astounded, awakened, sure that the thing we were witnessing was one of the wonders of the world, and of course positive that the many writers we saw in the house could do justice to the actor—even quite convinced that we too could write about *that*.

Yet when we read the books written on these six men and women of theatrical genius, or indeed by them, and then ask someone who saw any of them act if the books give any proper notion of the performers or the performance, the answer will be the old admission, that the books are empty of all which counted. This is why I feel that it must be one of the difficult things to do to write well of a great performer.<sup>1</sup>

It is this particular "greatness" which is so elusive, for when a performer is not so "great" he fares much better at the hands of the fine writer; the fine writer is happier, and the result is some perfect

<sup>1</sup> Heine's brief passages on Edmund Kean are among the few successful attempts.



little essays on Deburau, Ferravilla, Munden, Sada Yaco, Réjane, or Yvette Guilbert.

Why this is so I must leave for some profounder thinker to decide upon, for here I am to consider a book on one of the greatest of performers.

Eleonora Duse was one of the great figures. Apart from the fact that she was an exceptionally gifted, and possibly the most *perfect* actress of her age, she was a great figure in Europe.

And this is surprising, for she was not incessantly before the public. For years at a time she would retire; some say she sulked, others that the stage revolted her—people would say anything of an actress in those days.

What most people were unable to do was to recognize the real Eleonora Duse: they saw her and yet could not see her: they knew her and yet failed to understand her: she would speak to them and they would instantly fall under her power.

That is what she wanted—she was an actress, and the first thing the actress thinks of is to hold her audience. A great actress takes no chances and never fails to overwhelm her audience.

They were held and then they were carried away; their reason left them: that is what she both hated to see and yet longed to see herself doing: robbing them of all power.

This mesmeric trick is a necessary item in the performer's repertory.

## II

I have heard it said that life is all a dream, a delusion. I am not able to give more time than I have already done to enquire further. I have wasted quite enough time already wondering about many things I was led to suppose were other than they seemed.

Life seems to me to be quite good enough as it is, so I will not bother to stop and meditate in the middle of the thoroughfare.

But perhaps some actors and actresses in contemplating and in portraying life, have been unconsciously led to look upon it as a big delusion and have believed that as acting is (or is supposed to be) life in little, the stage is a world since all the world's a stage.

The remark is placed in the mouth of none other than the melancholy Jaques.

You have heard of this melancholy man—you have never heard of him except as a melancholy man. "We all visualize Jaques to be draped . . . in a careful cloak of black" writes Sir A. Quiller-Couch. We suppose we see him—sad eyes, long face, dark and moody: he crawls, he doesn't walk: he sighs often—he never laughs but he screeches.

Oh, we all know Jaques.

Yet I will venture to hold that not one of us can say what manner of man he was, how he should be represented on the stage, what he looked like, and what was really the matter with him.

At any rate we have not, to my knowledge, ever seen any right representation of him on any stage, even as we have never yet seen a right representation of Hamlet. . . . Another melancholy man by the by . . . and in black: sighing, groaning, distinctly depressed.

If really all the world be a stage and if really the stage be a small world, then of course when we see a man looking gloomy twice in the course of a week we will at once put him down as a melancholy man. We need make no further effort to understand anything more or to look any further; we can take things as the label tells us to take them. And this is how we took Duse.

We took her to be a melancholy woman: and she with her infinite spirit of humour, took us as we labelled ourselves.

She saw us entering the theatre, she sized us up, she knew she was expected to be a dismal wonder, and so she made up carefully for that part.

When she entered in the first scene we all rose and greeted her profound grief, our emotions were stirred to their very depths—(after careful sounding . . . about half an inch)—and in those shallows she revelled.

There are few examples in history of so terrible a sense of humour as she displayed in forcing herself to be gay while three thousand spectators were calling to her "Make us cry—oh, do make us sob some more."

The good lady did her best; for years she would solemnly enter the playhouse, and there donning something grey, grey-white and floating, would explain by gestures and sounds all the sadness that is in life. "Oh thank you—thank you" we said. We could say no more—our feelings choked us: we felt that we could not be sure not

to break down. We left a flower—a lily or a white camelia—and went our way. "Wasn't she *wonderful*"—"What an angel."

### III

I knew the Signora Duse slightly.

Never in my life have I met any one more merry . . . gayer, than she.

I was rather a shy young man. I'm not shy any more of course, but I remained young for a very long time, so for long I retained that shyness which seems to me to be so very stupid.

I was very shy when I first spoke to her, but she was exceedingly practical and kindly, and when some years later I met her again I remember she asked me to help her in some stage work.

I was to design some scenes for her . . . that was all.

She wrote down in fullest detail all the essential points which she thought could be of use to me.

I have these records still, and most interesting they are.

I will not re-copy them here for they are so technical that the public would be quite unable to understand what they mean. Like some sketch by Vazin or some notes by Probst they are not for the public but are solely intended for the eyes of the worker in the theatre; perhaps not even are they for him.

I ought by all the fashionable laws of profit and parade to produce them here and now, to reproduce them in facsimile; to draw attention to the way the i's are dotted and show the significance of the dash at the end of the word "*rêve*."

I ought to do this because I ought to possess some of that divine sense of humour which blazed in this fine lady and which permitted her to indulge her public.

I'll prefer not to indulge mine. Curiosity is a bad habit which has been far too long cosseted.

The letters I received from Eleonora Duse will remain with me and will never be published—not one word. The diagrams, designs, and all shall remain with me—for the public would merely find them one more proof of her "sad sad life," whereas I see in every word a fine amount of joy.

A legend was created around her by people not quite in their senses. I think I must have assisted at this in my youth.

People around me were ever so ready to cry out "Poor poor

woman" on every occasion that her name was mentioned: indeed they were rather too apt to do so about every woman.

I dare say I too took up the pose of one who felt quite sorry.

It became a legend, her sorrow. And this legend about Duse being a "poor woman" gathered force until all England was groaning "Oh the poor woman—oh, the poor dear creature" whenever she was mentioned: adding "that brute d'Annunzio."

What d'Annunzio had to do with it was not clear to me at the time, nor has it since become any clearer.

To judge from the wailing chorus, Signora Duse had met but one man in her life and he was called d'Annunzio: whereas we know that Signora Duse had met hundreds, and we are told that she lived near those she loved well enough to tolerate as lovers, and then, unfortunately, had tolerated none.

With her fellow-actors she was always a good comrade: although occasionally as a pick-me-up she would ask them all to die of the plague. Talma and Kean put it differently but said the same thing. Wagner said worse things. It's a way that artists have. Unfortunate to you, fortunate for us. You are the public, we are the artists and we are firmly persuaded that Wagner, Kean, Talma, and Duse are right. Let all the unlucky thirteen thousand place-seekers die of ten plagues if they are to continue to get in the way of all the good things which have a right to place.

And these curses so often hurled by artists of genius at these nonentities who won't wake up, who won't even be human, and who won't keep their place but who are eternally pushing and elbowing to get into places they are unfitted for, these curses are evils welcomed by the best actors and performers.

The best actors are wonderful dear creatures, and so they understand when another of the troupe says "Oh, go to Hell"; and when one of the most gifted of their number says it, like any ordinary admiral of the King's Navee, they rather like it.

Bernhardt was in the habit of a cussin' and a swearin' at the actors, carpenters, musicians, and all of them: that's understood. It means nothing: 'tis but a reminder that at that precise moment "*le diable au corps*" is getting a bit frisky.

I am, I note, writing in a rather too jaunty tone. But I am not exactly writing at all—you will, I am afraid, not call this writing: I am but what a friend of mine would call "thinking aloud."

## IV

Let me go on thinking aloud . . . and now think a while of this book.<sup>1</sup>

Mr Symons has always written well, and he writes of books even better, I think, than when he writes of actors and acting.

Books are such grand things.

When he comes to acting he falls in love with it. He loses his heart to the performer and he sometimes grows confused.

I have said how impossible it is to write on an actor's performance of a passion. So how write on the passion itself. Yet Mr Symons sometimes attempts to do this too.

He writes of Duse and her performances and he writes of Signora Duse and her lovers.

I don't see how it can be done, and so I am not surprised as I read to come across some slips.

To write that "Boito was Duse's only perfect and purely passionate lover"—to write of "the not quite final break or separation between Duse and Boito" is, I think, somehow to slip.

For who knows about such things, who can know? Not I, not you, and not he. Even Signora Duse, even Signor Boito may not have known. And I believe that the History of Man (ay, in the catalogue we go for men) deserves better of us all.

The history of actors too, deserves nothing less. . . .

Who is there can describe what Irving was in "The Bells" or even at supper after "The Bells"? I would that someone could. Who can show us Kean as Sir Giles Overreach? "It is not *possible*—it is not *possible*" whispered Munden the actor, as he was dragged almost in hysterics off the stage where Kean lay raving; and I find that is the best thing I know to describe *what* it was—this event of Kean as Overreach—and the impossible cannot be described. And the Kean scandals . . . or Rachel's amours . . . no, it is impossible to know . . . it is vulgar to repeat.

So that when reading about this fine actress Eleonora Duse we must put out of our heads much which has been put into them by those who never knew and cannot know.

Signora Duse's great sorrow is, begging your pardons, all fiddle-de-dee. Signora Duse's great good sense is quite another matter,

<sup>1</sup> Eleonora Duse. By Arthur Symons. 8vo. 164 pages. Duffield and Company. \$3.

and we may hope that a small brochure will some day be written upon this great good sense.

I never saw her but I was aware of it. I saw her seldom.

Once, without seeing her, I designed her some scenes and costumes when I was in Berlin. It was Hofmannsthal's "Electra" which I was told she wished me to design for. I did the drawings; I had the scenes, the costumes, made and these were sent to her. I never saw her about this; a German friend of the poet arranged everything, and from him I heard many reports . . . I forget what they were about but I believe she was not pleased . . . I think she did not play the piece.

The second time I designed for her she was in Berlin. I met her then. To me, when I was a young actor and in London 15 years earlier, she had always seemed something from another world—a kind of spirit—because it was at twenty years of age I first saw her act—one remembers well what one sees at twenty. Besides we young English men of that time were like that . . . often thinking of that other world.

So that when, later, I spoke to her in Berlin through her daughter who interpreted, and through one or two friends who interrupted, I spoke to her as to a Deity, as one wanting to know what it was she wished me to do. I felt that I was nobody and that she was a kind of dream.

These were very quiet talks, and her daughter was most kind and helpful.

With Signora Duse I was not, as I too often was with others, egoistical or impulsive, I was merely very anxious to help if I could. I felt more like a nephew than a co-worker.

She wrote down what she wanted. I was to go to Florence and do the work there, so although I knew no Italian I went to Florence and I did my best.

She had told me that no real scene-painter could be persuaded to carry out my designs, but she would find me "a little painter" whom I could instruct. She was not able to find me even "a little painter," so I walked around Florence to see what luck could find me and stopping at the open door of a furniture-dealer's shop which was being done up, I saw two house-painters decorating the walls with first-class whitewash: I looked up an Englishman who kindly acted for me as interpreter, and I engaged these two descendants of the Angelos' and the Vincis' to come and help me. The mere



detail of having to roam around in a strange town to buy the cloth (a rough sackcloth, for there was no scene-painters' canvas to be obtained in Florence, paper is used for sceneries and I was unfamiliar with paper sceneries) this and the other annoyances which can never be avoided if you are a stranger, were not what one expected one would have to encounter with the greatest actress of Italy to say the magic word to all those around her; one did imagine that all *that* would be made easy, but it didn't matter . . . my Italian workmen proved to be wonderfully quick, and we were soon at work in the teatro "La Pergola."

They gave me no trouble whatever: they slapped on the paint beautifully: it was a big scene so it took some 5 or 6 days to complete.

Then the scene had to be lighted. I was allowed an hour in which to do that. Some artists find a day barely enough time in which to light a rather difficult scene properly.

I too found an hour wasn't quite enough time, but I found we did it in an hour.

That is because the men at the Pergola were very able.

Then Duse came in to see the scene.

She showed great good sense.

Please do not suppose that she clapped her hands, began to weep, made speeches, or anything of that kind.

She was admirable. She saw at a glance that I was mad. She said to herself, "This is not a scene for an Ibsen play—it's a scene for—something big but it's not Ibsen because I know my Ibsen" and here her mouth grew a trifle hard.

But with astonishing good sense she pulled herself together and acted the part of a great actress who is dealing with a madman and who sees it's quite useless to protest.

"It is wonderful" she said.

Now could anything more sound in its common sense have been uttered?

Finding that this gave me and my men pleasure (for *we* saw nothing at all wonderful in it) she began to say a number of nice things—one more sensible it seemed to us than the other; she then went home to think it over.

I followed her in her thoughts so I know what those thoughts were. Here they are:

"This man, though mad, has done the work in time: he is dear



Ellen's son; that alone decides me that we must go through with it."

"It will quite astonish the Florentines who will call me all sorts of names"—here her thoughts grew twinkling and hot at the idea of puzzling her audience.

"This man pleases me" her thoughts went on: "he really *did* do the work in time—and I never thought he'd be ready. But it's a big empty scene. Yes, very big and so empty—I shall know what to do to be seen, but poor Signora—and Signor——, they will be lost." Here her thoughts were so complicated, became such a brown study, that I found it impossible to read them.

By the time they began to twinkle again she was already through with her lunch which was on a tray placed on a chair before which she sat in an arm-chair.

"Yes," she twinkled, "it will be really difficult and interesting to play in that scene."

Her thoughts here turned to Verona and to those early days when she had acted in the huge Arena there, on a not very large stage but with a certain sense of immensity around both her and the spectators.

She twinkled like a radio machine to think of the delight of having something difficult to do.

"When I snap the wooden paper knife in the second Act, will the sound be lost?" the twinkling became incessant now. "Lost!—what fun—why, it will sound like the crack of a rifle in that empty hall. Yes it will tell."

She rose up, went through bits of the scene—linking them together with a thought. Then she lay down to rest a little, and as she lay there her good sense decided that never again would she ask me or any other crazy artist to design her any other scene. "You must do me new scenes for 'Lady from the Sea,' 'Borkman,' 'Cleopatra,' 'Dame aux Camélias,' all my repertoire" she had cried out to me and my merry men when she had seen that immense but (*I think*) quite unpractical scene.

And that too was rare common sense in her—to be so full of kindness—to want to say she *would* do anything . . . meaning to and yet not meaning to.

And now at home quietly resting on her bed to register in the pages of her mind just as quietly, just as sensibly, this thought,—  
"Never again."

I who read her thoughts though I was at the other end of Florence, saw all these kind and sensible entries recorded there.

She rested, and then she acted—then she wrote me—still full of ardour for the future which she had so sensibly decided should never be. You see she thought I was quite mad.

You call such women wild, unpractical, emotional, carried away, uncertain.

You have a phrase in America which many of us in England like because it is expressive, "Not on your life." Well, I now say "Not on your life."

Duse was a remarkable being. She deserved to be prime minister of Italy—she was fitted to be that by genius if you like to call it that. I shall call it by great good sense.

## V

And how commanding she was.

In my London days when I was only twenty and she came there to play, I made adoration, as to some power which could command all that is good to the good of the world, even the stage world.

Instead of adoration, let us call it downright fear. It's plainer.

Later on it was the same—Duse was always tremendous to me. She seemed to be the Queen of the European Theatre. I felt that at any moment she might give an order and 300 people would leap forward from the spot where I supposed them to lie hid by her express wish. . . . I waited to see that spectacle—that miracle—at Florence. I must admit I was ready to leap with them.

They never leapt: perhaps they didn't hear her: perhaps she never called them: all I know is I worked for the Queen of the European Stage when she seemed to have no courtiers, no staff, and no one willing to raise a hand to do anything. It was most exhilarating. One was in a state to join in with ecstasy—to follow obediently, anywhere.

She gave no *outward* sign of that immense good sense of which I have spoken—and so I did not discover this at the time; I read her thoughts, was puzzled, but still I did not discover what it all signified, its practical, its almost worldly wisdom.

When, after Rosmersholm at Florence, people began to say "Craig is to produce a dozen plays with the great Duse" there was quite a little stir. When none of these were produced there was

another little stir. But I never dreamed the extent of the nonsense which was being spread around about a terrible quarrel between this Queen of the Stage and one of her most willing assistants.

Some years later I overheard two people talking loudly about me in a café. I chuckled and listened on.

"Yes he was very furious—banged the table."

"What did she do?"

"Poor dear . . . she cried"—"after that she rose in her majesty and said 'Craig, leave me, go! forth!! I never wish to see you again.'"

"Really, how interesting, and why was he so cross?"

"Well you see he hated all women meddling in the profession—"

"Yes, yes, I heard he had treated her badly."

This, ladies and gentlemen, is the nonsense (Shakespeare calls it "leperous distilment") which they pour into your ear, these odd folk, day and night.

This was supposed to refer to me and Eleonora Duse. Fancy any one treating the mighty Duse badly, being cross, banging a table, *I* of all people too . . . I who in her presence always dwindled to the age of eighteen or nineteen, thought her a kind of divinity, barely uttered two words in her presence—and never would have dared to say *Bo* to her shadow.

But I will let you into a secret.

When, after seeing my work for Rosmersholm, she had asked me to help her with all those plays, some of which I have named, I did certainly feel happy, for I really was thoroughly deceived—she did it so naturally.

Then when she began to send me telegrams, cancelling this play, and then telegrams cancelling that play—then I was also deceived. This time I certainly felt most unhappy. And I was to be heard saying, "In work all women are alike—a pack of whims; first yes; then no. Alone they work wonderfully; to work with them is a downright torture."

It was only later, after pondering on it for some years, that I saw what I had taken for whim was great good sense.

And then it was that I began to see the immensity of her colossal life performance off the stage, and my big scene for Rosmersholm dwindled to the size of a penny match-box.

## CERVANTES' HOUSE

BY AZORIN

*Translated From the Spanish by Katie Lush*

ESQUIVIAS is a town with a seigniorial and warlike tradition. Turn to the Topographical Data not yet published, that were demanded by Philip II. "Esquivias," says the Chapter of Replies to the Monarch in 1576, eight years before Cervantes' marriage, "Esquivias contained 250 inhabitants; of these, 37 hidalgos of ancient lineage." These hidalgos bore names such as: Bivares, Salazares—the name of the father of Cervantes' bride—Avalos, Mejías, Ordoñez, Barrosos, Palacios—the name of the mother of Cervantes' bride—Carriazos—the name of one of the heroes of La Ilustre Fregona—Argandoñas, Guevaras, Vozmedianos, Quijadas—the name of the good Don Alonso. "In letters," the Council goes on to say, "there is no record that any persons of pre-eminent merit had come from Esquivias; but in arms there have been many captains, ensigns and men of valour."

I walk again through the narrow streets and *plazas*; I go from one side to the other, aware of the languor with which the breath of the wakening spring has filled me. Doorways are open, affording now and then glimpses of a gravelled *patizuelo* with its twisted vine and pompous euonymus bush. From the Calle de la Fé I turn into the Calle de San Sebastián, from the Calle de San Sebastián into the Calle de la Palma, from the Calle de la Palma into the Calle de los Caballeros; the street-names of these old Spanish towns have an indescribable fascination and power to detain one. I stop for a moment in the Calle de la Daga. Could anything be more charged with enchantment and allusiveness in an old house than these wide dismantled corridors, unfurnished, silent, these small doors? Is there anything more suggestive in an old city than these short little streets—like this Calle de la Daga—where no one lives,

NOTE: By permission of Azorín, this portion of Cervantes' Bride has been translated from Provincial Towns of Spain and will be followed by four other selections.

where the walls are stable walls, broken perhaps by a wide gate, always shut, which leads into a patio, with a background of open country, perhaps a rising slope on which seed is germinating.

I gaze for a moment or two; and walk on through the narrow little streets. "The houses in this part of the town," say the citizens in 1576, "are of the following description: they contain patios, and some of them are of a considerable elevation; they are built of mud and *gessu*." Great iron lattices tower gloomily above one's head; the huge screens of the old porches in the patios jut out, uneven, worn by the years. As I walk I read the names of the streets on the little name-plates with blue-tiled lettering. One of these gives me a sudden shock of surprise. Imagine it! I read: Calle de Doña Celestina. . . . I turn the corner and find on another little plate the name: Plazuela de Cervantes. This is arresting, momentous; I must be standing in front of the novelist's very house. Stationed before the gateway, I peer in at this extraordinary, portentous house. But an old woman—one of those wordless old countrywomen in black—comes from the background towards me. "Perhaps," I say to myself, "someone like me—quite unknown—would be committing a grave indiscretion if he were to enter a strange house." I take off my hat, bow, and say: "Excuse me; I am just looking at the house." The lady in black invites me in. And hereupon—by some psychological process that you are familiar with—just as it had previously seemed extravagant for me to go into a strange house, it now seems perfectly logical, the most natural thing in the world, that this lady should have invited me in. Everything, since the first nebular swarming of atoms, had been so disposed that a wordless woman should invite into her house a philosopher no less wordless. And I go with an easy mind. And when I encounter two men servants who seem to me unaffected and sensible, it is with the same simplicity and inevitableness that I exchange a few words with them. In front of the house is a patio with high walls and in the patio are a vine and a well; the pavement is of small round stones. Behind the patio stands the house; it has two wide doorways opening on a vestibule that runs the length of the façade. Billows of bright sunlight pour into this vestibule; a canary sings. I examine the two dark canvases on the wall: they portray Biblical scenes. Then we ascend a wide staircase on our right and find ourselves in a salon of the same size and

shape as the vestibule on the floor below; the windows on the two large balconies are ajar; in the bright squares of sunlight on the floor stand plants in tubs symmetrically arranged. I divine the tender, busy hands of a woman. Everything is clean; everything is orderly; the orderliness is ingenuous, frank, but, it must be admitted, tyrannical—the orderliness one so constantly finds in provincial homes. We go through little doors and great panelled doors; it is a veritable labyrinth of reception-rooms, living-rooms, passages, bedrooms, one after the other, irregular and picturesque. Here is a quadrangular salon with its red furniture, in which a gentleman of 1830 looks at you from his frame over the sofa. Here is a narrow little doorway with a short passage leading to an iron balustrade over which Cervantes used to lean and gaze at the boundless, lonely, silent, monotonous, gloomy plain. Here is a bedroom with low doorway and glass chandelier: here Cervantes used to sleep with his bride. These whitewashed walls that I am staring at saw the passing of the ironist's happy hours.

I find myself downstairs again in the *zaguán*, sitting in the sunlight, among the green leaves of the shrubs. The canary sings, the sky is blue. I have already proclaimed it: everything, from the first nebular swarming of atoms, was disposed so that a philosopher might savour this moment's intimate contentment, in the vestibule of the house in which a great man's bride once lived. But something alarming—perhaps it too was pre-ordained—is invading my life. The inhabitants of this house have an exquisite courtesy: a few words were spoken in an adjoining room, and now I see coming towards me a charming girl. I rise, my emotions touched at the sight of her: she is the daughter of the house. And for the moment I see in this slender, self-contained girl—who among us is always master of his fancies?—the very daughter of Don Hernando Salazar, the very bride of Miguel de Cervantes. You see now that my emotion is justified? But something overpowering, rather frightening, curbs my imagination. The charming girl carries in one hand as she approaches me, a tray of cakes; in the other, a tray on which is a goblet of golden Esquivian wine; and at this point the small, tremendous conflict declares itself; this sort of thing is always happening in country-houses; my experience of provincial life—as you have guessed already—extricated me from the difficulty. "If I take one of these large cakes they make in the country," I told myself, "while I am eating it, since I cannot



take the wine till I have finished it, this charming girl—Cervantes' bride—must wait before me—an insignificant stranger." It would be an extravagance, would it not? Perhaps I did not notice the faint blush on her face as she came through the doorway? I took the smallest I could, of the broad household cakes, and gulped the wine quickly. The girl stood motionless, with cheeks aflame—eyes cast down. And my thoughts, during the few moments of talk with this gracious courteous family, were with Catalina Salazar Palacios—the lady of this house in 1584, the year of Cervantes' marriage—and with Rosita Santos Aguado—the lady of the house in 1904, one of the most sympathetic figures of the new century. My fancy identified the two, and when the moment came for me to take my leave, I looked once more, for the last time, as I stood in the doorway under the blue sky among the flowers, at the pretty girl—Cervantes' bride.

That evening I wanted to go to the fountain of Ombídales, near the town, where the woman Cervantes loved had had her vineyards. It had been ordained that I should go in company with the *curé*—a worthy successor to Pérez, the priest who married Cervantes—and with Don Andrés, the *Mayorazgo*. The vineyards once owned by the Salazar family no longer exist; the young vines of the Herrador, the Albillo, and the Espino vineyards have all been uprooted; the well has its source in a ravine; a tiny thread of water falls from a long iron pipe fixed to a flagstone, and lies in two pools. Wide slopes scratched by the plough fall in gentle undulations on either side. The distance is closed in by a blue pencilling of mountains. Twilight overtakes us. "This," said the *curé*, "is the lovers' walk of Esquivias." "Along here," added the *Mayorazgo*, with ironic emphasis, "when the crops are high, I have seen very many things, very strange things."

Night is drawing on; in the west the sky glows with the softness of mother-of-pearl. The immense, monotonous, grey, gloomy plain lies silent: behind a slope the dark roofs of a village can be seen. The stars shine as they shone the night before and through the whole bygone eternity of nights. And I think of the words which, in twilights such as these, among these melancholy plains, the master of irony spoke to the woman he loved—simple, common words, grander words than any in his books.



## POEM

BY ARCHIBALD MACLEISH

O Sun, instigator of cocks, Thou . . .

Quickener! Maker of sound in the leaves  
and of running  
Stir over the curve of the earth like the ripple of  
Scarlet under the skin of the lizard! Hunter!  
Starter of westward birds!

Be heard,  
Sun, on our mountains! O be now  
Loud with us! Wakener, let the wings  
Descend of dawn on our roof-trees! Bring  
Bees now! Let the cicadas sing  
In the heat on the gummed trunks of the pine!  
Make now the winds! Take thou the orchards!

(We who have heard our hearts beat in the silence  
And the count of the clock all night at our listening ears)

Be near!  
Shake the branches of day on our roofs! O  
Be over us!



CHURCH IN THE VALLEY OF THE CHEVREUSE. BY ADOLF DEHN





POMERANIAN POTATO DIGGERS. BY ADOLF DEHN



## EAST AND WEST IN RECENT FRENCH LITERATURE

BY HENRI PEYRE

**I**N his preface to *The Dance of Siva*, a collection of essays by Ananda Coomaraswamy,<sup>1</sup> Romain Rolland declared: "There are a number of us in Europe for whom European civilisation no longer suffices—dissatisfied children of the Spirit of the West, who feel ourselves cramped in our old abode. . . . We few look towards Asia." Romain Rolland was thus giving expression to a quest for new ideals, and to confident belief that those new ideals may be found in Asia—a possibility which seems to have become within the last two years the main topic of discussion in French letters. The opposition between East and West is not, of course, a new one; we have been familiar, since the war, with a whole mass of apocalyptic literature prophesying the decline and fall of our Western civilization. But if we look back upon the recent literary production in France, we shall be struck by the number of articles in reviews and the many books dealing with that problem. Most of them, we need hardly say, are mere "fad" and due to a superficial and snobbish fashion; and the vogue of the subject has naturally been enhanced by the political events which have brought China into the headlines of our newspapers. Yet, and when all is said, deeper reasons must be sought for that universal preoccupation with, and attraction of, the East, stronger now in France than ever before.

The outstanding book in the debate, and the one which best sums up the whole discussion, was published last spring by Henri

NOTE: This article was first read at the General Meeting of The Modern Language Association of America, at Louisville, Kentucky, on December 30, 1927.

<sup>1</sup> *The Dance of Siva*. By Ananda Coomaraswamy. 8vo. 139 pages. The Sunwise Turn, Inc. \$3.

Massis and is entitled *Défense de l'Occident*.<sup>1</sup> Massis is well known to all students of French letters and his influence is great among certain circles of the French youth of to-day. He is a literary critic and a philosopher, he is even a prophet, but a "prophet of the past." And he must be a very happy man indeed, for he has found a solution to all problems, a solution which lies in a strict Roman Catholic orthodoxy and a return to the scholastic philosophy of St Thomas.

His *Défense de l'Occident* is a direct and straightforward book, constructed with great architectural skill. The first sentence gives the keynote to the whole work: "*Le destin de la civilisation d'occident, le destin de l'homme tout court, sont aujourd'hui menacés.*"<sup>2</sup> We live now in a crisis; Europe is demoralized; we have doubts about ourselves and our mission; a dangerous disorder has crept into our thought as well as into the political situation. Since the war, we have lost our faith in civilization, and many look to the East for new ideals and a new message. Massis is not concerned with the political, but only with the philosophical aspect of the question. He is the champion of what he calls the *idées-mères de l'Occident*. Those main ideas of the West he sums up in five words: personality, unity, stability, authority, and continuity<sup>3</sup>; five essential elements of Western thought that are now threatened by a certain ascetic idealism, a strange mysticism in which personality is dissolved and a return to nothingness advocated. The Graeco-Roman culture we have inherited is thus in danger of destruction. From Asia the danger is looming; but, for Massis, the frontier of the East begins on the Rhine, and he deals with the enemies of the West in three separate chapters: Germany—Russia—Asia.

According to Massis, there have always been close affinities between German and Eastern thought. "*L'Allemagne, cette Inde de l'Europe,*" as Victor Hugo had already said. The Germans, throughout history, have personated opposition to Rome, and German philosophy has always distilled and spread the most venomous poisons of the East. Hegel, Schopenhauer, Kant himself are allied

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Defence of the West*. By Henri Massis. Translated from the French by F. S. Flint. With a Preface by G. K. Chesterton. 8vo. 260 pages. Harcourt, Brace and Company. \$3.

<sup>2</sup> *Défense de l'Occident*, Plon, 1927, page 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, page 16.



in Massis' opinion with Hindoo metaphysics. But that permanent affinity has been made more obvious by recent doctrines. As is well known, in 1918 and in the terrible years of discouragement that followed the war, Germany went through the same crisis which France seems to be undergoing. In the despair of defeat, and because their own organizing had failed, the Germans concluded that with them the whole fabric of civilization and of Western culture had failed. They turned to the East to find there a new Messiah, and sources of renewal. Hence the vogue of Keyserling's doctrines, of Spengler's vast apocalypse which provided a would-be rational justification for the existing despair. Hence the great fame of Tagore, Dostoevsky, and innumerable translations from the sacred books of the East. That crisis, Massis contends, was not accidental; it revealed the true bent of the German people, for whom Greek and Latin culture has always been a mere varnish; their Eastern tendencies, held in check by the Empire, shone with a new radiance when the imperial organization crumbled.

Massis then passes to Russia, and to a still more sweeping arraignment. Bolshevism is, to him, a return to Russia's Asiatic origins and destiny. Peter the Great had turned the country towards Europe, but such a change was too violent and artificial to last for ever. Dostoevsky is quoted as having proclaimed that "self-destruction is natural to Russia"; and Herzen, another nineteenth-century novelist and philosopher, who declared that "the starting-point of modern Russia is the negation of tradition."

Lastly, we reach Asia herself, and there our Catholic philosopher finds complete anarchy. Buddhism, according to his authorities, has become an intellectual and moral chaos. Everywhere appears the identity of the subject and the object, of man and of God. Perfection is defined there as the suppression of action, whereas for Christians it should be action, and an active love for God.

And the fourth part of the book offers the remedy to those poisons and ailments. That remedy is not to be found in our rationalists and our humanitarian ideologists, in our free-thinking doctrines which have only increased the evil (for Asiatic students back from American and European universities often seem afterwards our bitterest enemies). Hope lies in the treasures of antiquity alone, as preserved by the Catholic Church. Let us go back to the mediaeval ideal of perfection and unity as opposed to our modern

ideal of force and progress; let us return to the Middle Ages and the doctrine of St Thomas.

It would be vain, and would take too long, to dwell upon the many objections that have been made or might be made to a thesis so dogmatic. Not a few of us, besides, would perhaps be tempted to ask: Does the West indeed need such a defence? and would not a return to St Thomas be as perilous as an acceptance of Asiatic ideals?

Moreover, many of the so-called facts on which Massis founds his thesis, and even many of the quotations of that ardent apostle, could not withstand severe examination. The connexions between Germany and Asia, to begin with, and even of German metaphysics with Hindoo thought, are a frail basis to build upon. How a country which has produced a Goethe, a Kant, and a Nietzsche, to mention no others, can be called Eastern, many of us will not readily see.

In his chapter on Russia, moreover, Massis grossly overdoes his indictment of Russian religion and of Russian thought. His whole philosophy of history seems open to question. It is true and well known that Peter the Great had imposed his reforms through violence. But historians pointed out long ago that before his reign there was not a mere *table rase*; he brought into clear relief merely, tendencies which had been apparent before him: commercial, intellectual, artistic, religious relations, had already existed between Russia and Western Europe. And there is scarcely more truth in his view of Bolshevism as a return to Asia. In fact, has not Lenin himself declared that he meant, on the contrary, to complete the task of Peter the Great by "westernizing the peasants"? Bolshevism might more aptly be described as an attempted "Americanizing" of Russia; as a worship of matter, radically opposed to Eastern doctrines.

More could be added, to justify the East in opposition to Massis' arguments, and the central thesis of the book has itself been questioned. Are unity, stability, continuity, attributes of Western civilization alone? Has not China possessed them to an even greater degree? —But the point we should like to bring out is rather that the great success of this book and the discussion to which it gave rise throw a curious light upon certain aspects of recent French literature. Few are the volumes published this year in France

which do not contain some allusion to the debate between East and West. One of the most intelligent is *La Tentation de l'Occident*, by André Malraux, a young Frenchman who has lived for some time in China. He imagines a Frenchman and a Chinese exchanging impressions of each other's country. In that form renewed from the *Lettres Persanes*, Malraux writes a severe attack on our Western civilization, purely exterior and material: whilst "civilisation is not a social, but a psychological thing; one only is true, that of the soul"<sup>1</sup>—and this the West still lacks. His conclusion is one of utter pessimism, coldly and forcibly expressed. Scarcely more hopeful is *Bouddha Vivant*, Paul Morand's most recent novel.<sup>2</sup> Every page expresses preoccupation with the same topic. The hero is a young Asiatic prince who leaves his country, out of curiosity about the West. We are told the story of his first contact with English civilization, in London and in Cambridge; then of his efforts to preach Buddhism to the white race, and to live, in turn, as a second Buddha. His varied experiences and disappointments are recorded with the usual liveliness of Paul Morand, until at last the prince goes to France to be a hermit in the Meudon woods. There an American girl whom he has met, wants to join him ("You are so magnetic!" she exclaims enraptured). But the unfortunate Buddha falls in love with her, goes later to New York to see her again, and thus realizes that he has been unable to free himself from desire. A final adventure in a New York restaurant where he is made to understand that "the gentleman from Asia" is not a very welcome guest disgusts him with the West altogether, and he starts for his native country, rich in destroyed illusions. The book, as a novel, is not entirely successful, although its success as witnessed by the number of copies sold, has been stupendous; but the intention of the author is clear: it is to show the faults of our material civilization. The conclusion is that East and West must each work out its own salvation, for each will ever be impermeable to the other's secrets. The author does not conceal his sympathy for the East, but is convinced of the incompatibility of Eastern and Western ideas.

<sup>1</sup> *La Tentation de l'Occident*, Grasset, 1926, page 30.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *The Living Buddha*. By Paul Morand. Translated from the French by Madeleine Boyd with the assistance of Gertrude Linnell. 12mo. 287 pages. Henry Holt and Company. \$2.50.

Even the delicate and fanciful Jean Giraudoux could not refrain from mentioning the debate between East and West in his novel of last year, *Eglantine*. *Eglantine*, his charming young heroine, hesitates between the love of two men; one is a member of the French nobility, the offspring of a very old family; the other is of the Jewish faith and represents the East. Rivalry between the two is emphasized in some very clever passages, especially in their different ways of making salad. Of course no solution is offered. We shall not, in our turn, presume to offer one. But all these volumes<sup>1</sup> point to a preoccupation which, once we have disentangled it from certain elements of empty and superficial vogue, remains serious and striking in the younger French literature. Many people in France seem to have developed a new taste for mysticism, suffer from a lack of confidence in our rational methods, our frenzy of haste, and our material pleasures. It is not surprising that, in such a predicament, they should have turned to the East and repeated with Romain Rolland: "Europe has, for centuries . . . trampled Asia under foot, without once a suspicion that she was playing the part of Alaric on the ruins of Rome. But Rome has vanquished the conquering barbarians, as Greece has vanquished Rome, as India and China will finally vanquish Europe—a victory for the soul."<sup>2</sup>

Such a crisis, of course, might be only momentary and a lingering consequence of the world war. The same uncertainty and uneasiness prevailed for a time in 1919-20 when it became the fashion to speak of a new "*mal du siècle*." Then the tide turned and French youth found a cure for this new romantic malady—some in sports and a spirit of adventure, others in travel, others still in the discipline of the Catholic Church. Then two of the most promising among the young writers, Henri de Montherlant and Drieu la Rochelle wrote *Chant Funèbre pour les Morts de Verdun* and *Mesure de la France*—hopeful books. But the year 1927 has witnessed a new outburst of lyrical confessions in prose whose theme is a monotonous, all-pervading despair. Drieu la Rochelle has given *Le Jeune Européen*, the very title of which denotes that he

<sup>1</sup> And more might be added, such as *Dépaysement Oriental*, by Robert de Traz; *Partir*, by Roland d'Orgelès; et cetera. . . .

<sup>2</sup> Preface to *The Dance of Siva*, pages ii-iii.

regards his moral sickness as but one case among many. Montherlant's last volume, *Aux Fontaines du Désir*, expresses the same mood with the same extreme and sometimes boyish vanity, but also with the same sincerity. The moral result of the war, he now declares, is zero—religion is vain—literary distinction, desire for power, interest in oneself, love, all futile remedies. Even travel, that means of escape advocated by Paul Morand, is scornfully rejected, since it does not provide real escape, escape from ourselves, and only makes us resemble a donkey in a circus, always running after a carrot maintained in front of him by the clown. The whole book is a long cry of despair. Others still among the young writers display the same mood without the same talent; Daniel Rops recently studied in *Notre Inquiétude*<sup>1</sup> that post-war generation to which he himself belongs. It seems as if we were indeed in the presence of a new "*mal du siècle*," and one deeper than a century ago, since the mechanistic development of civilization and what the French call the "Americanization of Europe" provide new reasons for anxiety. Paul Valéry himself is going to bring out early in 1928 *Notes sur la Grandeur et la Décadence de l'Europe*, which, coming from that subtle and profound mind, are sure to add a new interest to the subject in his country and abroad. The conflict between East and West thus expresses, in a forcible way, the hesitations of many a mind in France—hesitations between an industrial and material production copied from America, and a respect for the individual himself, as an independent creature. The conflict, in this regard, becomes, as André Siegfried puts it in his penetrating study, *America Comes of Age*,<sup>2</sup> "a dialogue between Ford and Gandhi."

<sup>1</sup> Perrin, 1927.

<sup>2</sup> *America Comes of Age*. By André Siegfried. Translated from the French by H. H. Hemming and Doris Hemming. 8vo. 358 pages. Harcourt, Brace and Company. \$3.

## VIRGINAL

BY RUTH PITTER

I thought not on love's mystery  
On any day, nor dreamed at night;  
Those royal riches moved not me,  
I made no rime on that delight.

But mighty as a wind from sea  
The old rimes roared in the wild dawn!  
Like to white stallions, royally  
The Ballads thundered: like a fawn,

Like to a silver fawn (O blessed  
Creature, and O the holy place)  
The gentle and the moonlight-tressed  
Pastoral melodies did pace.

And a stag-royal, a stag of ten,  
Drank at the waters of my mind:  
Why should I dream of lovers, when  
He wandered followed by no hind?

Up to the concave of my sky  
Burst like the daystar from the wave  
The eagle; and the turtle's sigh  
Fell like a dew on beauty's grave.

For she lies buried in my heart,  
Though in my soul she has her throne;  
For ever present and apart,  
Both paradox and paragon.

She is to be, she is long past,  
Shall not be taken, never was;  
Ever the ancient, still the last,  
The night, the veil, the darkling glass.

Up to her throne I cannot climb,  
Though on her grave I often lie;  
Her triumph fits not with my rime,  
But I can weep that she should die.

Let the dove sigh, the eagle fly,  
Strong may the stag and stallion range!  
They eat the flower no man can buy,  
The bud miraculous and strange:

And of the deathless waters drink.  
Fair let them rove and ever free!  
They lead me to the abysses' brink,  
They turn their morning eyes on me.

The cloud doth clothe their golden sides,  
The rock is bare beneath their feet;  
Far off the smoke of cities hides  
All that the heart of man finds sweet.

In an imperial solitude  
They are as sole as gods can be,  
Born of a strange, a heavenly brood,  
And gazing on eternity.

So on love's mystery I dream  
Neither by night nor yet by day;  
Poor is his crown and pale his gleam  
Where the bright stags and stallions play:

Where in the gale from the white north  
The wild fowl crows in the wild dawn!  
And from the woodland cometh forth  
The pastoral like a silver fawn:

Where in the highest concave swims  
The eagle; and the turtle's moan  
With a still dying cadence hymns  
The death of beauty all alone.



## THE AFTERNOON

BY MERIDEL LE SUEUR

THE river shone through the budding trees; the opposite bank flared upwards and out over the moving water. The trees rose up in a thick forest, rose up like an army of Ethiopians with turbans of bright green. The man and the woman threaded their way over the black soft turf, carpeted delicately by the first May flowers that grew deep and secretly in the moss and underbrush. Ahead of them, around the bend of black-stemmed trees came a sound of falling water; it dropped thin and singing through the air and struck the ground with a sound as of flesh upon flesh. A damp odour rose from the ground; a dampness touched the hands serpent-like when the woman thrust hers deep in the secret leaves of the flower plants to pluck the white stems of May flowers; a blue mist rose stinging and steaming from the river; the trees looked wet with the turbulent rush of flowing sap mounting within them, as in veins when the blood is fast; the fragile heads of the flowers were anointed and upon pressure, dripped at their beheaded bodies a white juice. The buds the woman carried in her hands were golden and moist with a bitter honey which held them close, sealed them against too hasty disclosure and the new green looked wet as jade that is dipped in the sea. Everything, the entire magic world through which they walked, threading their way through the upstanding trees, looked like a reflection within water, as if born into being upon the body of water.

"Yashenka, why are you unhappy?" said the woman bending her head over the flowers, that cut from their course drooped over her hands.

He walked on, his eyes bent on the ground.

"I carry myself on my back, Meretchka, that is why I am unhappy."

They walked on between the trees. . . .

"Look!" cried the woman suddenly. They stopped, alert as animals and peered through the perpendicular black bodies of the

trees. Down the road in double file, with their heads bent and their black garments swinging about them, austere as the trees, marched the monks.

"They make me tremble, I don't like them. I am unhappy to look at them." She turned quickly to him.

"Why?"

"The church, Meretchka, and its oppression. All down the ages it has stood for falsehood, against science, against progress, even against life." She watched him, standing against the tree like some satyr, flaming and dark, his eyelids cutting down over his pupils sardonically. His brown hands were clenched.

"Yashenka, you're beautiful," she cried and moved against him.

Bewildered, he enclosed her in his arms, smiling vaguely. Thus they stood listening to the rhythmic feet of the monks as they wound out of sight between the trees.

Their departure left the forest space with a quiet that rose from the ground, with the rising of the trees, with the rising of the flowers and the first spring foliage. The man and woman stood, upright with the upright things, held within the quiet up-moving force.

"Yashenka, the tree is like a primaeval animal," Meretchka whispered in his ear which was close to her. She was reaching over his shoulder touching with singularly white hands the body of the tree. "It has ebony scales like a dragon. Put your hands on its body with mine."

He turned quickly and thrust her against the tree. She cried out sharply and clung to him, he threw back his head and startled the silence by his loud sudden laughter. He dropped his hands, and the woman moved away from him in alarm, scattering the flowers she carried, in the green lichen which her feet pressed. The man stopped his laughter suddenly and moved to the tree.

"Why are you afraid? Come here and look." He stooped beside the tree, touching the roots that swelled and swirled from the ground, distended beneath the black soil, swirling upward directly from the ground, rising steadily from the darkness and radiating outward. She came near in wonder and stooped beside him.

"Someone has wounded it here. Some little savage boy." He looked at her intently. "See its golden blood, congealed at the surface, and its white fibrous flesh."

"Yes, yes," she said. "Yes," she breathed, "could I touch it?" She put her fingers on the white and gold wound, gashed in the black bark; they both looked at the internal body of the tree without speaking, without even thinking.

Then both stood upright and silently looked at each other. They smiled and arm in arm walked on, turning in and out between the black-stemmed trees.

"Why are you laden with yourself?" Meretchka asked softly.

"What am I to do, what is there to do, what is one to do in America?"

"America," she answered, "is young, and crude yet, but how do you know that it does not offer the best opportunities for expression? Surely it is better than the decadence of Europe. . . . It is raw wine, but it is from good stock and it is not at any rate, too old."

He looked at her hopelessly and dropped his hands in dejection.

The dark ground gave under their feet, and from its damp side sprang the tiny May flowers, the first wild orchids; the fern was turning green; and from the dark tips of the trees shone and glistened the breaking buds. Across the gleaming river the black bodies of the trees slanted and rayed upward and outward, like distended veins; the bursting buds, caught and frail in the sunlight, seemed not to belong to the tree, but to surround it like a mist and to have descended upon the stumps of the trees like a flock of transparent wings.

"What do trees, these trees, remind you of?" Meretchka asked. The irritation of the last speeches still stung within them. He walked on, his gaze on the ground, and did not answer. She walked on holding the flowers and gazing at him half humorously though with full understanding, from beneath her dark brows.

"Do you know what they remind me of?"

"What?" he said in a deep voice.

"Look at that unbelievable bright brass green. It looks like a design of hammered brass, very delicately done, with inlay of ebony to mark the trunks and branches."

His eyes brightened, his shoulders moved as they always did when his sensibilities were touched. "That's fine," he said. It was almost as if it pained him. "It's fine. It's good to say things right, isn't it? Isn't it good?"

They came to a bridge.

"Are we going over the bridge?" the woman asked, looking across, with the bright reflection of the water playing over her face.

He looked at her keenly. "Yes, does that too mean something extraordinary to you? You endow everything with meaning."

"It has meaning." She spoke with fervour. "I do not like you to say that. I do not endow things. They are endowed already. Before I am they were. I can only look at them deeply." He took her hand and they walked across the bridge, the water, placid, reflecting them when they leaned over, reflecting mystically the trees, the floating clouds, the birds flying over.

A breeze blew upon them, a breeze that smelled of water. When it struck them they became exhilarated and breathed deeply, and laughed. The woman stopped and turned her face straight to the sun and stretched her arms over her head. He watched her smiling.

"Yashenka," she said, stretching her neck and feeling the gold heat on her closed lids, "must you save the world? Must you?"

His face darkened, his lids lowered over his eyes.

"I cannot be happy, while there is injustice, poverty in the world." She could see him through the gold heat in her half closed eyes—his red lips tightened, his hair, growing on his head wiry and black like a wolf's, moved in the wind, over his proud head, full over the eyes; low on his cheeks there appeared a flush of colour. . . . He stood looking down, awkward with the force of his emotions.

Suddenly she took his hands and they ran over the bridge, onto the opposite bank and went clattering over the white stones, in the winding path which led to the water's edge. He caught her on the path in front of a cave and they went on down the path breathing hard. . . .

The trees in the river marshes were large, rising upward on giant stems, showering the sky with their bright green delicate foliage.

"Yasha, what do trees remind you of?" He looked at them silently, almost timidly, but did not answer. "What do they remind you of? Why don't you tell me? Can't you tell me? . . . You don't really see them unless you know what they are like, unless you can say them."

"I don't know what they are like," he said simply.

She was impatient. "Oh, you do. Try to say them."

He hesitated. "What do you think they are like?"

"They are oriental," she said lavishly. "They are like designs by

Léon Bakst for a Russian Ballet, for let us say, Schéhérazade, black, jet black, swathed trunks, bright, brass oriental green foliage . . . like Ethiopians with turbans of verdigris. . . ."

He did not look at them. "I do not know whether they are oriental. I do not know that." After a silence he said shyly, "You know what they make me think of? I'm just saying this . . . this is just my opinion. . . . Of course trees make me think of this. Trees make me think that they are all there, you know. That they stand up of themselves. For a long time, longer than I stand up." She took his hand in gratitude for that; they wandered down a road which ran between the enormous rising black fountains of trees.

"We wander quite carelessly, don't we? As if the world were all quite right." He smiled at her not sure that she wasn't making fun of him. "It's as if there were justice. One can believe in justice here. Even you?"

He did not answer. There was no solace in nature for him. She felt that too. It was almost as if he believed in injustice, as if he were a fanatic of injustice.

"Yasha, when you came out of the penitentiary, how did the world look—it must be like being born again."

"Shall we cross the ferry here? I want to take you down the other side. When I came out of the gates the world was pretty wide I can tell you, so much sky and so much earth was like a benediction. I never believed in benediction before." He cupped his hands to his mouth and in a deep voice, that resounded down the river, he hallooed for the ferryman. She sat down on the damp bank.

"I suppose that is the voice you used to use on the soap-box."

"Get up off the damp ground, Meretchka."

The ferryman was a young boy with fat red cheeks who before they got across was puffing and panting and sweating. The water swirled and eddied beneath them and sucked around the edges of the boat. On the opposite bank the road sprang up from the river bed, mounted a hill, and rambled away into a stretch of woods, on the river bluff. . . .

To their right, the land was in the process of being cleared. The trees lay on the ground, leaving the stumps of their roots, white, circling in hard fibre around the pith. The trees lay sadly on the ground, their half-sprung buds drying on them. They passed the felled trees and came to a forest standing upright, far as one could

see, receding back and away into impenetrable shadow, coming directly upward, and from their sides sprang the limbs, and from the limbs, arching against the sky above, and over the shadow beneath, was springing the tiny substance of the leaf. The shadow beneath these arteries, and existing between them was so palpable as to almost suggest a body. The ground was damp and bare and cold, the stripped body of the tree rose directly from it. They stood silently, a forest of these bodies retreating into shadow, advancing to the road, standing by the road.

They trembled and went hurriedly through, and out into the sunlight again, and into the sight of the gleaming river, and the verdigris trees.

A young boy ahead of them ran after his father and mother. He had a bow made of a river reed, and arrows made of the white hollow reeds; he shot them upwards, they arched and fell in the grasses by the road, and he went shouting after them.

A soldier came out of the forest behind them startling them when they turned suddenly—he had a young girl in a bright cap in his arms, and turned and kissed her loudly; then they both laughed, the girl shrieked and ran back into the forest, he hesitated a moment, looked around and followed her, his heavy boots clattering and receding as they lost sight of him in the black forest.

A hill rose perpendicular against the road. . . . Small trees pressed against its sides, high up at its crest the white flowers of the blood-root leaned out of the shadow into the slant of sunlight, which fell from the west. On the wide summit of the hill stood an old stone church.

They followed the road, which turned and mounted the side of the hill to the village which lay in the ravine. When they saw a path cut off and ascend through the brush, they followed it, being plunged immediately into damp shadow; the wet ends of the brush whipped against them, the tanglements of the brush, with their slender stems and tendrils, wound together in the shadow in thick design and descended to the earth, where they tangled and wound about each other as they entered the ground. They bent their backs and, one in front of the other, went through the tunnel of tangled brush silently and emerged on the other side at the foot of a flight of granite steps which ascended the hill directly to the stone church.

Half way up Yasha turned, full of admiration. He liked vistas.



"Isn't that fine?" He pointed to the country, the tilled ground, the forests, the river moving through the blind earth, and beyond it, the steel city, jutting into the sunny sky. "It's fine."

"But why is it? Why is life?" he said. "I don't understand it. I don't see any reason for it. Do you know?" She saw he was fervent and real. He was not being either merely young, or merely dramatic. Strange Russian temperament, she thought. There was sadness in his question. . . . He didn't know. Did it delight him to taste the flavour of this sad bewilderment, this mysterious secret of life?

"Why ask what it is about?" She threw the wilted flowers she had been carrying onto the ground. "It's enough to be, isn't it?"

"No, it isn't. One must do something, become something, know for certain where one is going!"

"Don't you really see the goal, Yasha? I mean outside of the attitude, there is a certain pleasure in sadness, in that futility about life."

"I'm not being dramatic, Meretchka. That's the way I feel."

After they had neared the summit he said, "What is the goal?"

She thought of several things to say, but walked on instead, swinging the budding branch she carried.

The church stood on the hill before them, a simple stone building with a steeple above the little door. The hill was very high, the air was clear, and the sun seemed near there. Far below the river appeared from the fields and disappeared into the bluff of the black forest. The white flowers of the blood-root grew on the precipice, and around the church in the broad clearing the grass was new and bright green. In front of the door of the church a group of children stood. . . . Two little girls in big hats that fell to the back of their necks were murmuring catechism from little black dirty books they clutched in their hands. . . . Three boys, in black shining suits, stood nervously by. Another little girl in a polka-dot dress, stood on one foot while she held the other behind her, in her cupped hands. She hobbled around in the sun, her pigtailed flapping against her back. They had stopped together.

Around the corner of the church, dressed in long black monk's habit, came the priest. He was very tall, and his body curved delicately, while his head was set graciously. His hands were ascetic and veined sharply, where they hung at his sides and he raised the right one to bless the children. The two little girls got



up and put their fingers in their mouths. His face was narrow with deep-shadowed eyes, and his head was bald and high except for a furze of white hair which rimmed his skull. His garments swung around him as he rapidly approached the children.

"Look at his head and face," Meretchka whispered; "Titian was right. I have never seen that warm flesh tint on men, that pure flesh tint."

The children gathered round him, looking up at him. To see him they had to look straight up, bend their necks far back as if they were looking at the sky.

They could not hear what he said to the children. Only the deep chant of his voice reached them, and the children's answers, in chorus, loud and shrill. Yes. No. The sun shone on his bare head, and he was bending and gracious to the children. At last he turned, and held the wooden door of the church open and the children raised themselves on tiptoe, looked at him apprehensively, and went under his arm into the church.

"Come, let us go in too." Her face was flushed, her lips parted, and she pulled him to the door on tiptoe too, like the children.

"No, no," he said, "I'll wait for you. I don't like to go in churches."

"Oh, yes, come, don't be foolish. Utter foolishness! The church is very old—it will be strange inside."

"Do I have to throw away my walking-stick?"

"No, no, come."

"I don't belong in churches, Meretchka, they embarrass me."

They had already entered the vestibule, which was of wood and smelled musty. Meretchka, with the same strange apprehension and awe that had been on the children's faces, opened the second wooden door that led into the church. And they stepped inside.

It was a small church with wooden ribs. The altar was bright. The figures were small and in light colours of red and blue and pink. . . . There were stars behind the altar. A bland statue of the virgin, with a small, pink face, was nearest them. The stations of the cross were rather gay figures, despite the anguish of the faces. Here was not a sad religion, of anguish and passion, but a beneficent, even gay one. The altar cloths were tatted, and crocheted, edged with home-made lace; the crucifix at the right of the altar was in white with a bland figure on it with a bright red scarf

around his thighs; the face was in anguish but it was a symbolic anguish, quite without pain. The sunlight came in through the windows and fell on the children who sat bolt upright in a line, in a pew in the centre of the church. The girls peered round at them as they came in and whispered to each other and resumed their stiff little attitudes. The priest had gone to the parish-house, which was a big wooden house behind the church.

He came back from behind the altar. There was a kind of excitement about him. . . . He had some papers in his hands, and came towards them. He bent over them. They could see his face and head against the stained glass window behind him. The skin was unbelievably delicate, and the veins arched within his temples. The eyes, in the shadowed recesses, were small and kindly, but a little vacant. His mouth was quite old. His habit was stained down the front and his hands were dirty as if he had been digging in soil.

"Are you Catholic?" he asked, gazing past them and waiting for no answer. "I will give you some of these. They are very interesting reading. I can see the young man is an abstainer." Meretchka stole a glance at Yasha. He blushed gracefully.

The priest handed them some yellow ancient-looking manifestoes, fumbled with those he had left, mumbled that he had only a few of that certain kind, and took away from Yasha two that he had given him. Then he straightened up, folding his hands instinctively, and went to the children. They all strained up their necks towards him and he began to hear their catechism. Yasha and Meretchka rose and shut the door on the excited chanting of the children, in "Hail Mary, full of grace."

Out in the brilliant light the manifestoes looked very quaint and ancient. They strolled over the edge of the hill and sat down on the grass.

On one of the manifestoes was an engraving of a mediaeval saint, with a dotted halo around his head, and underneath was a mediaeval convert—how he broke himself of drink; his life; his visions; the story of the little cup he carried out of which he must always drink.

Yashenka withdrew from the papers and sat looking out over the river vista.

"Do you believe all that, Meretchka?" he finally asked despairingly.

"Monks believe in something. I believe in any belief, Yasha. It's as authentic as your revolutionary passion. Don't you say so? There may be monks who are charlatans just as there are revolutionary henchmen. Why not? Don't be bitter."

He moved his shoulders impatiently and sat beating the ground with his walking-stick.

Meretchka leaned over and put her hand on his. "Don't beat the earth."

He looked at her intently. "Don't you believe in anything?"

She did not answer and turned her face away.

He questioned her further. "What is the goal then?"

It was such a vast question. She hesitated. Then she took the budding branch she carried and held it before him.

"That is the goal," she said pointing to the buds. His face was still dull, dark with hate and wrong. "Take it in your hands."

"I don't want to," he muttered, looking at the thick ground.

"Yasha, take it in your hands. Yasha, you are afraid of creation." There was silence between them as she held before him the branch springing from itself, breaking itself into myriad life. At last without looking he held out his hand, and she gave him the budding branch. He did not raise his eyes but held it from him.

"Look at it."

At last he raised his eyes to her.

The malice had gone from him and he laid his head against her. She touched his hair.

At last he muttered from the grass, "I don't know how to believe in creation." She did not answer but touched his hair, put her hands deep within his hair, and felt the blood throb into the scalp.

The sun burned on them, penetrated them. After the winter pallor, the lustiness of the heat almost made them sick. They sat quite still, the heat sinking into them. As if the very body of the sun set in them, moved within them from horizon to horizon. The woman thrust her hands through his hair and he lay quite still. How dark he was, she thought, with his face buried in the earth. After all what a subterranean dark creature he was. Burrowing through the passages of bewilderment and hate. Dark. Dark. Like a stubborn animal, fighting the world. Valiant dark animal.

"What are you thinking?" she asked him.

He raised his face to her; it was flushed from the heat and printed with the stains of the grass. "Don't let's talk—just this dark body

of the earth . . . the heat. . . ." He dropped his head again. Far below them on the mystic surface of the river she watched a fisherman row out and lay his net, circling about back to the black soft shore; then he pulled it in slowly, laden with fish, and they flashed their sinuous water bodies in the sun; once he picked up a giant turtle and with all his strength flung it back into the water and for a moment it was like an ancient design upon the sky, an old hieroglyph of Egyptians or Toltecs. . . . The sun naked in the sky threw out terrific heat. The flesh was now heated to unbelievable sensation. The brain took on the same sensation of heat waves . . . the whole organism was burned to this heat. The river was placid and reflected the sun. The leaves of the trees seemed to have opened out. On the hillside below them a man lay with a paper over his face, and a woman in a bright blouse lay asleep in the curve of his out-flung arm. Children's voices came up from the village which lay secure from the primaeval heat, in the moist curve of the hills.

"Yasha, the heat of the sun turns the vision black," Meretchka said very low. "It chars the body." He raised his head and put it in her lap.

"I am so happy," he said. "You believe, don't you, that I want to believe in creation?" She kissed his forehead.

"We had better go. It's four miles to the mushroom caves." They rose, with difficulty defining the lines of their being, the familiar movements of the body in stretching, standing, and walking.

"A very little more," Meretchka said, laughing comically, "and we should have been sun ecstasies, utterly mad."

Their path home led along the river bluffs. With the city ahead of them in its mist, the river below and the fields beyond the river, and the forests marching alongside. Meretchka went up all the ravines, plucking flowers. Yasha went straight along standing stock-still when she darted off on excursions, remaining in thought until she returned with flowers which she gave him to smell.

"If I could get enough money to be free so that I could study. Do you think one could play the commercial game, with all the crooked rules and not be contaminated by it, do you?"

"I don't know. Have you been able to do it, any of you? Some of you in jail, your valuations broken."

"Yet I am not going to work eight hours a day as I did when I was a kid, when I first came to America. I'll starve first."

She took his hand and they walked on.

"What can we do?" She didn't know.

"When I am alone, I am so happy, or with you. Then to make adaptations to that city." He pointed out to the smoke mist that rose from the city. They stopped hand in hand.

"You are something entirely different down there. . . . When we first came from Russia to that city, we lived in the river bottoms; then we moved up in the Jewish neighbourhood, and I sold papers, and Russian tea, and blacked boots, and sold violets to the prostitutes on the river front. I had to learn the vulgarities. I had to learn how to be American. How to bluff. How to lie, to cheat, to overcharge, to steal. I don't know what it all means. I lose myself there. Do you think I like getting drunk, Meretchka? But we all get drunk. Getting drunk is the only privilege we have. Getting drunk and bawling about the revolution."

The old sullen sardonic look was on his face. The sun flushed it.

"Suffering is a beautiful heritage of your race, Yasha. Your race are geniuses when they can turn their suffering to creation instead of destruction."

"Can you imagine, Meretchka? You can't, you're so sure of your love, of your friendly universe; but imagine being pitted against a world. You feel it's you or the other guy. There isn't any good thing left in you. . . ."

He continued after they had walked towards the city for some minutes. "I got so I didn't believe in myself. I wouldn't be caught uttering a beautiful phrase. We learned poetry and used to walk all night, after we got a little liquor in us, reciting poetry to ourselves. We lived at night. Like the Jews in the pogroms or in their underground dives in Spain. Did you ever hear the Jewish chants?" He stopped and turned to the river away from her, with his head lowered. He felt self-conscious, singing. So she didn't look at him. The sun was just setting. Shadows lay across the river.

There came from him the low moans and chants, dirges from centuries of suffering. The rolling strange words, the minor chords, the eerie half notes. When he finished a cold ascended from the river. The sun had entirely disappeared.

He turned and came close to her. "They are so low and minor because they had to be sung in secret. That is why they are so dark."

The sky seemed to open for them—the space below and above too vast—so they turned into the dark ways of the forest. . . . The dark secret odour of the earth came up around them—the bodies of the trees rose into the air at every hand. The sky was shut out, the black limbs creaked and moved slowly above them.

He drew her down at the roots of a large tree that rose up in impenetrable twilight. The city was hidden from them. They sat close together, quite silent. A bird flew past them now and then—or a bat—and the shadows deepened.

He whispered to her, "When we were leaving Russia our baggage was on the carriage, we were going to America, it was early in the morning, so that the dew still hung from everything. I was a little boy and my father had a great beard. We went out over the fields past the Volga, past everything I had known since my birth. It was as if I were dying to be born again in some strange country. And then from across the river, from a distance came the sound of a flute, clear and high. And my heart turned inside me, melted, moved out. . . . It was a shepherd from the hills with his flock, my father told me, yet I cried, tears ran down my face. And my mother scolded me and my father bellowed at me. . . . I feel like that now . . . I feel like weeping. As if you played to me a flute, a strange thing that made my heart, after its long sourness, turn sweetly and move and weep. Come near me, Meretchka. Move into me."

They lay weeping in each other's arms as the afternoon faded and the night, like a flock of beneficent birds, flew above them, came down upon them, nested over them, so they rested in the shadow of its dark and winded wings.



JACK IN THE PULPIT. BY BERTRAM HARTMAN







A LADY-SLIPPER. BY BERTRAM HARTMAN



## TWO POEMS

BY JOHN DAVENPORT

### FIRST ADDRESS

Lady, I shall not dare the telephone  
Until the appointed hour. Yet were you  
Walking now this morning avenue,  
Eyed by these windows, keyed by the tone  
Of luxury's exhausts, we should not walk alone  
In separate prides that build to make us two;  
They would with single stride pierce through  
The walls of hesitation we have shown:

So pirouette, my cane, this tortured hour  
Before the shops! Be confident of Spring  
When my lapel will bear the rose, her flower,  
And on her lips a verse of mine will cling.

You shall walk with me down this thoroughfare  
Toward final walls that gate, infinite air.

### ETUDE

Speech fails—  
words scatter as chaff  
on the turbulent wind,  
the kernels fall  
thought falls wingless  
into frosty clod  
tight,  
close, infertile

## TWO POEMS

"What is—what does he think that he is saying?"

Will words reflect the verve  
Glowing from purple glaze  
Of clay that strains to curve  
Into the perfect vase?

Or how shall optic  $\pi$   
So shutter as not blur  
The sides that multiply  
Into the circular?

"It almost seems at times that he is praying."

## A RHETORIC OF INTUITION

BY CHARLES K. TRUEBLOOD

"**H**ERE is another system of philosophy," are the words with which, in *Scepticism and Animal Faith*,<sup>1</sup> his introductory volume, Mr Santayana opens his present philosophical considerations. It is a somewhat ironical deprecation, doubtless, in more than one respect. The system, as he goes on to suggest, is less "another" than one we already know, to a degree. His attempt is to resolve and elucidate that great tacit body of philosophy which in every age civilized men have been able, more or less, to make out for themselves, according to their degrees of competence and courage, and to hold to—a system, parts of which are the stable common elements of innumerable formal philosophies otherwise at odds. His declaration is surely to be attentively received, even though he may be speaking of his own offerings, for he has more than once shown himself to be his own most detached and observant critic. If he has aimed here at a human orthodoxy which should be fundamental and final in its relation both to the ideal and the actual, he would seem to have done so with a clear and thorough consciousness of all that the varieties of modern thought in every sphere imply in the direction of human change and possibility.

The philosopher, he suggests, must attain and must maintain himself upon the crest of a great divide in his own human nature, a watershed overlooking his natural animal faith on the one hand, and on the other the scepticism that must arise from the conflict of his various animal beliefs in the world of matter. The mass of men probably do not of themselves much dwell in this upper solitude of introspection. They inhabit rather, the contentious valleys of belief; are lapped about with one credo or another, dwellers in "the flux of substance," knowing nothing, indeed dreaming nothing of the realm of essence—in which all the possibilities of being are individual and eternal—except as the accidents of matter call

NOTE: *The Realm of Essence: Book First of Realms of Being.* By George Santayana. 8vo. 183 pages. Charles Scribner's Sons. \$3.50.

<sup>1</sup> Reviewed in *THE DIAL*, September, 1923.

forth one essence or other for their intuition. Achievement of this divide in mental being is signalized by recognizing all one's knowledge as no more than various forms of faith; and yet it is accompanied by the realization that complete scepticism is incompatible with our nature as spiritual beings in a material world, for as living spirits we touch at once two realms, the realm of matter and the realm of essence.

Yet there is nothing mystical about such a concept: "The realm of essence is not peopled by choice forms or magic powers. It is simply the unwritten catalog, prosaic and infinite, of all the characters possessed by such things as happen to exist." . . . "Essence is anything that might be found, every quality of being." . . . "Distinction, infinitely minute and indelible distinction of everything from everything else, is what essence is." That these statements possess, indeed, potentiality *in extenso*, the reader will be aware who follows out their specific, dispassionate, and magnificent elaboration. Mr Santayana's system is perhaps less a system than a great (and difficult) attitude, a regimen of intuition; it is less a pronouncement than a principle of criticism. Least of all, surely, is it anything which can be set down as dogma. And if the axioms upon which it is founded are to be thought of as verbal, then the word *verbal* must be recognized as having a massive significance in our human development, biologically, it must seem—as intellectually. Distinction and expression, necessarily verbal performances, are inextricably involved in those powers of wonder and thought which have parted man so abruptly off from the rest of the animal world. The realm of essence may be no more than a universe of terms or characters, but it is also no less than the *sine qua non* which makes man more than a simple creature of hunger and matter. The appreciation of essences is an act of spirit, and this present philosophy by distinction—which is modern though not new—becomes a great rhetoric of intuition, guided in the first instance, as a reader of Scepticism and Animal Faith must be aware, by the principle that man can be no better secured against illusion and its consequences than by recognizing and allowing for the fact that so long as his mind dwells in the realm of matter, it is the fool of its senses and its animal brain.

If a philosophy is modern which has pertinence to our current



states of spirit, then Mr Santayana's philosophy is modern in a significant sense. We have not often required philosophy so generally as we require it now, philosophy especially in the sense of something by means of which the finer vistas of our interior being may be reasserted. Perhaps humanity was never before so sharply dislodged from its existing mental habit as it has been in the last half of the nineteenth century by that ever augmenting avalanche of thought in which Darwin rolled so tremendous a first stone. As a consequence we have come to think we shall not want again, philosophies that wall us in by means of our egoism, and so we fly to the dogmas of science, of which we know nothing—as shortsighted possibly as any we have left. Surely at this present juncture we have need for philosophers cognizant of the armoury of thought that science makes possible, yet not of such easy intellectual virtue as to yield them utterly to the blandishments of the scientific dogma. That such a need could be satisfied in the philosophy here before us seems evident both from the critical genius of Mr Santayana's excursions and from the specific orientations he accomplishes while about them.

Mr Santayana has been a soliloquist his life long, it would appear, and he still is one. Thus the great opulence of his present thought may very possibly impress the reader as being addressed subtly and splendidly to itself alone. As one could before, one may again, simply overhear an iridescent monologue, except that what were certainly never journeyman contemplations, are now presented in a final maturity and mastery. Mr Santayana's inaccessibility has sometimes been laid at the door of his style, which, shaped and matchless though it is, seems at times to interpose the supremacy of its phrasing between the meaning and the reader. The import is often remote, but in the way only that philosophy generally is remote—from the casual, customary, and more or less "animal" concerns to which our minds are habituated. Rather than his style it might well be the unprepared reader who is ill-assorted to his purposes. For if one consider philosophy not merely as the exercise of dialectic, but as a profound discipline in contemplation and intuition, then few modern spokesmen of the spirit are as absolutely philosophical as Mr Santayana. His effect may be, as it has been, in inverse ratio to the number of his readers; yet one

cannot but continue to believe that this great poet of the rational will long be a major influence on thought. Doubtless he could have been more accessible—by becoming more customary and casual—but it would probably have been at the expense of the disciplines which produced *The Life of Reason* and the present *Realms of Being*. It may not be soon that we shall have another reconciliation of the ideal and the actual as firm and clear and far as this is; or a reassertion as just, of the powers and prowess of spirit.

## CHANGE

BY J. I. N. NEUGAS

The afternoon is late, and the snow in the park  
is melting, although the sunlight has lost its  
heat

Everyone is enjoying the snow in the people's  
park before it melts; and the time-light of day,  
before it changes

The vertical sky in disappointed colours is an  
above sea sky and they have lighted the arc-lamps  
too early

Soon it will be dark.  
I do not wish this. For if it stayed . .



*Courtesy of the Daniel Gallery*

TWO BABIES. BY YASUO KUNIYOSHI



## FROM THE CLOD

BY FRANCES HATHAWAY

THE brown earth lay open. She slapped the lines over the horse and settled to the steady drive of the furrow. Up and down she strode, with a dignity that draws from the soil. Cords stood out on her arms as she gripped the plough-handles and pointed steel into sod.

The click of a tractor brought her to a stand.

"So Paul"—she pronounced it "powl"—"go after that when I tell him it is no good. He will see. He cannot plough like with a horse."

A kerchief bound her head. She wore men's shoes that clapped as she walked, and an apron of gunnysack, but her eyes were keen with light as her son came toward her across the river-bottom. He was tall—almost too tall—and was pale for a country boy.

"So you bring that dam tractor, eh? I bet old man Lemphi two dollars you would get one sure. Now you see how you can plough with no horse."

"I wish I could show you, Mother, but I've got to have old Grey to get gasoline. Let the ploughing go. I'll do it to-morrow in half the time."

As he was fumbling with the traces, his mother unhitched the horse from the other side with practised hands.

"I should stop my ploughing again while you go to town to get gasoline. I got my work to do. Maybe you will bring Annie home so I get some help, eh?"

Paul buckled a strap before replying.

"Annie doesn't go with me any more."

"So? For a long time I do not see her. Who you take out for a girl now, Paul?"

"Oh—I go round a little with Miss Landon."

He replied with studied carelessness but his eyes spoke.

"Miss—the teacher," his mother burst out. "Not the school-teacher, Paul?"

"Yes. I thought I told you."

"How should I know? I got no time to ask for foolishness."

"You needn't work like this, Mother. I'll do the ploughing. And you must let things go. We can get along."

"Sure we can get along. But I make my garden and raise my ducks and chickens just the same."

She looked at him, proud of the sum his bees had brought during the year. He had not been able to work hard yet had achieved success. What would he do when he became strong? She went toward the house while he led the horse to the barn.

Paul going with the school-teacher! A pang of regret came over her that it was not with Annie who could clean and cook. How many times she had come with Paul, washed the windows, hung fresh curtains, and put in order the little house that eluded all Mrs Koski's effort to make it livable. She had been so busy with the spring work that it looked pretty bad, but Paul had been just as busy, coming in only for meals and was too preoccupied to complain.

The house was low with ramblers climbing over it. An odd smell made one wonder if Mrs Koski disposed of her garbage by throwing it out of the window. Newspapers, rags, and old shoes littered the back porch. A flutter and cheeping halted her as she opened the door. That very morning she had promised to move the chickens. They had been incubated and hatched in her bedroom, brooded in the kitchen, and now grown to wing and tail feathers, were a filth and a nuisance. She shooed them into their box and moved a broom around the floor.

She thought at first she would scrub, but remembered that the cow was ailing. She must give her a pound of epsom salts and a warm mash. Apprehension obliterated all thought of house-cleaning, though it did not take her mind off Paul. That he should be keeping company with the teacher was not surprising. She had always known that he was destined for the best. But the career she had planned for him had failed. She remembered the doctor's look as she said to him,

"I did not want for Paul to work so hard like I do. When he got twelve years old I sent him to learn a nice easy trade with Krause, the baker."

How could she know that it was outdoor work he needed? "For three years Paul do nothing but fry doughnuts," she broke out. "Then I go after that Krause. I tell him he must learn Paul to make bread."

Flour dust. The weight of the dough. Night work. Late hours, the doctor said. Yes, she knew. A dance here, a dance there. But what would you? Paul was young. Then he had had to give up his trade, come back to the farm, and work with her.

Perhaps he need not. He did well with the bees, but she mistrusted his innovations. That tractor, for instance. He had put money in it when he could plough better with a horse. Passion to save him made her want to break the tractor.

"I soon fix that machine," she said. But as she spoke there was a moan from the cow and she seized a pail and hurried to the barn.

At last she thought she could leave the cow. Her clothes were spattered with wet mash and smelled of the stable—and of course, her shoes; she had done the drenching with her own hands.

It was late afternoon and Paul should be home. His horse was standing by the gate, hitched to the light wagon and there was the sound of voices in the orchard. Yes, he was there, among his hives, with Miss—could it be the teacher—Miss Landon?

The girl was listening eagerly as he talked. Manifestly a girl of refinement, young and lonely. Mrs Koski studied the two figures intently.

"I think I lose my Paul this time for sure," she said to herself. "He is catch for good. And she like Paul too. I can see that. No more Annie. I would like better it was Annie."

They were coming in her direction and she could see the girl's face.

"Yes, she like Paul for sure. She look like nice girl. Maybe I like her too for Paul. I try hard to make nice welcome."

Fired with this motive she stepped from her hiding-place and confronted the young people. Her hair had escaped from the kerchief during her labours with the cow and hung in wisps. But she was unconscious of her clothes and shoes and thought only of Paul.



"Mother!" he exclaimed with horror; then recovering himself Paul introduced Miss Landon.

"I be glad to meet you. Excuse my hand, Miss." His mother's teeth were bared in a smile. "I work so long with the cow I am not clean up yet."

This was strongly apparent. Miss Landon rallied however and took the grimed hand.

"So my Paul show you his bees, eh? He make money with them but I not like them. The dam bees they sting my horse and make him run away." Recollection became stronger.

"No, I got no use for bees. To hell with the bees. I keep my cow and ducks and chickens."

An odd expression crossed Miss Landon's face. Paul blushed and looked uncomfortable, and sensible of a *faux pas* Mrs Koski said quickly,

"I show you my garden, Miss. You like flowers, eh?"

"You should see Mother's flowers, Miss Landon," Paul broke in with relief. "There are no flowers like hers."

They followed her to the garden where daffodil and narcissus rose rank on rank from spears of green, and there were crocuses, tulips, and hyacinths. Miss Landon was ecstatic.

"What flowers! Aren't they lovely! I don't see how you grow them!"

"That is easy. In the fall I wheel manure and fork it into the beds. I work it with my hands so I do not break the roots. In the spring they grow quick."

Mrs Koski plunged in among the tulips, daffodils, and narcissus and built a sheaf of them.

"For you, Miss. You have some to take to school to-morrow. Now we go in the house."

It was an unfortunate suggestion and Paul followed reluctantly. But Mrs Koski was bent on hospitality.

"Sit down, Miss Landon. I make you cup of tea."

Powerless to remonstrate, Miss Landon seated herself on a dusty chair. An odour of neglect pervaded the house. The week's wash was piled in one corner. Dusty curtains hung at specked panes. Mud and fine litter strewed the floor.

The tea was poured into cracked cups and great pieces of bread accompanied it, on which Mrs Koski had spread clarified butter.

"I make my butter always into lard," she explained. "It keeps better so."

Mrs Koski's butter would. Miss Landon swallowed the strong tea but found it impossible to eat sour dough and plead no appetite. Mrs Koski became concerned.

"You should take some medicine, Miss Landon. Look, I show you." She searched about in a stack of newspapers. "Ha, I find it. See where it say, 'You, my sister.' That is what you take and you be all right."

The girl flushed as she saw the advertisement of medicine purporting to cure female ills, and to divert his mother, Paul suggested that he take Miss Landon to see the chickens.

"Sure. Yes. But first I show her the little ones," said Mrs Koski.

She threw open the door to the kitchen and scattered crumbs. In a moment the floor was white with a fluttering, pecking brood, making a sound like rain. Paul choked.

"Haven't you moved them yet? You said this morning—"

"Oh, God, I forget. I am so busy, Miss Landon, I got no time to keep house. Some day Paul get him a wife. Then I have no more to do in the house."

A spasm contracted the girl's face.

"Thank you, Mrs Koski. The chickens are darling and thank you for the flowers. But I must go. Yes, indeed, you have a wonderful place. Good-bye, Mrs Koski. Good-bye."

She was gone. Mrs Koski drew a long breath. It was over and had been done nicely. She congratulated herself that she had made tea.

"For Annie I make just coffee. But for the teacher, no. I bet she laugh when I tell her about the bees."

Then she saw her spattered clothes.

"By gracious, I forget to take off my apron. I forget to wash my hands. I keep my shoes on what I wear in the barn. I lose my head next time Paul bring the teacher."

With contrition she began to make herself neat. A faint low

from the barn reached her ear. Catching the gunnysack apron she rushed out.

"By gracious, I get the doctor. If I don't watch I lose that cow."

Paul did not come home that evening but she was not disturbed. He often stopped to have meals with the neighbours, and the people with whom Miss Landon was boarding had probably urged him to stay. She ate her own supper of fried duck eggs, carried hot water to the sick cow, and then satisfied that the animal was resting, went to bed. Paul must have come in toward morning for when she got up once during the night he had not returned. He was lying face down on his pillow when she looked in on him. As soon as she heard him stirring she laid his breakfast, but instead of coming into the kitchen he went out the other way and she saw him go toward the orchard. He was walking slowly, hunched and miserable. Mrs Koski stared.

"My Paul! He is sick. Paul! Paul!"

He did not look back and she went after him. Although he was close to the hives where Mrs Koski never ventured, she rushed up to him.

"Paul! You not feel good? Come in, I make you hot coffee."

He turned away that she might not see his eyes and said gruffly he would come when he was hungry. She understood somehow that his suffering was not physical and left him. In the orchard he sat down on a bench, his head bowed on his hands.

Tears blinded Mrs Koski's eyes. She knew. It was Paul and the teacher. She could not quite visualize what had passed between them, but she knew what he was feeling. Her Paul had dreamed of marrying this girl who held the key to a world for which he yearned. Yes, Paul was made for better things. She had tried to help him but was too stupid, too ignorant. She had failed.

Anger toward the girl blazed up in her, but it died down. The girl was not to blame. It was not snobbishness but instinct. The gulf that lay between him and Miss Landon could not be bridged in one generation. Paul and Annie perhaps. His children would come into the heritage that Paul was denied. He was young.

He would forget. But how comfort him? What would interest him?

At last she had it. The tractor! There it stood in the driveway. She would propose the ploughing to Paul as if nothing had happened and go with him to admire and praise. Managing levers and pedals would absorb his whole attention. They went together to the bottom ground, Paul driving the tractor, Mrs Koski running beside it. Slowly and carefully they descended the hill, then rigged the plough behind. Paul was holding the plough; the engine was running itself.

"Such a good work I never did see, Paul," exclaimed Mrs Koski when they had ploughed one furrow. "I tell old man Lemphi he is a fool not to get one right away. You make the farm pay, Paul."

This was so entirely Paul's opinion that he looked almost cheerful. When they came to the end of the furrow the tractor had to be turned. Paul let go the handles to take the wheel. Mrs Koski caught at the plough to keep it from dragging. The long wavy furrow satisfied Paul and inspired Mrs Koski. The next was harder. Try as he would, Paul could not keep the tractor in line to make the earth turn close to the first furrow and bare spots showed. Paul shook his head.

"I'm not up on steering," he said. "I've got to get used to the levers. If I could ride—"

"Sure, Paul. You got to learn. I help you."

Paul clambered into the seat and started the engine. Grasping the plough-handles, Mrs Koski followed, up and down, up and down, guiding the plough-point deep into the brown earth.

## JOURNEY

BY A. J. M. SMITH

One and by one  
Under a drooping sun  
His footsteps fall.

With heavy tread  
And unbowed head  
He goes alone:

The end unknown,  
On either hand a wall.

Death walks behind  
With pace designed—  
An overtaking tread.

He asks of heart  
To bear a braver part  
When Death draws nigh:

And for reply—  
Heart moveth not. And all is said.

## A KNIGHT-ERRANT

BY ALEXANDER BAKSHY

THOSE who induced Charlie Chaplin to try the movies, did not suspect him of being more than a "funny man," though he came from the vaudeville stage—the stage which still preserves some of the great traditions of "pure" acting. In vaudeville he learned how to create an image and convey emotion by a movement of the body, a twist of the head, or a doll-like fixedness of expression; from vaudeville also he has carried the sense of dramatic composition; the use of emphasis in a portrait portrayal, the appreciation of rhythmic pattern, the knowledge of the exact location for the dramatic accent. Had he stopped with this and remained merely a master of technique, he would have achieved something rare in the motion picture. But he went farther. He created a character—a creature entirely fantastic, utterly impossible in real life, yet so human, so lovable in its childish naïveté and pathetic helplessness, so uproariously humorous in its grotesque ingenuities that it has acquired significance equal to that of any of the historic types of the stage.

And now The Circus. The poor tramp; fame and fortune; hunger for food; hunger for friendliness and love.

He has unwittingly got into trouble with the police, attempts to escape, and loses them and himself in a mirror-maze. He disguises himself as one of the front-side specimens of a Noah's Ark, but is discovered and chased into a circus. In saving himself from the police he has incidentally become a member of the troupe and has caught an egg for breakfast by chasing a hen, when a fair lady in distress, a circus equestrian, puts him in his proper stride as the gallant knight-errant that he truly is. A knight-errant, a love-lorn Pierrot, an impish harlequin, our hero then proceeds to reveal himself in a series of episodes among which are two feats of inspiration: a scene in a lion's cage and a scene in which he walks a tight-rope with the help of a disguised cable. This latter scene, however, includes a struggle with monkeys which strikes a somewhat alien, discordant note. Its scarcely premeditated effect may be ascribed to the change in the dramatic style of the scene which

from a situation artificial and farcical passes into realism and borders upon tragedy.

Descent from the tight-rope—the climax of the story—and the downward slide of fortune are simultaneous and he “is gradually fired”—a gross exaggeration. Poor and helpless he will not allow the fair lady of his heart to join her fortunes with his but restores her instead, to his more prosperous rival and quietly withdrawing from the selfish people who no longer need him, resumes his lonely wanderings through the world.

The sad ending of the play is significant. The tragic mask is increasingly apparent in the comic make-up of the waif whom the world has so tenderly taken to its heart. The irresponsible harlequin is receding. The tendency may or may not enrich Mr Chaplin's art. But if it is true that each new film reveals an ever growing maturity of thought, one would welcome similar progress in the “direction.” The Circus is neat and competent but here as previously, its author has failed fully to rise to the opportunity placed before him by the extraordinarily fantastic world of the character he has created. The great screen genius of our time should not be afraid to find for the play as a whole, the fully expressive visual form he has found for himself.

## FROM A DECK CHAIR

BY MELVILLE CANE

Whenever the steamer dips  
Within its careening ellipse  
It leans on the slope of the sea,  
The sliding hill of the sea.

Whenever the steamer lifts,  
The hillside flattens and shifts,  
Descends, and drags a sail  
Down with it, under the rail.





FISHER WOMEN, BY HENRY J. GLINTENKAMP



## ITALIAN LETTER

*April, 1928*

**R**ICCARDO BACCHELLI is one of the writers of the Roman Ronda who soon after the war tried to found a new literary movement, establishing it on Italian literary tradition, as recognized by them especially in certain aspects of Leopardi's work. The movement of which some of my readers may remember that I have spoken in a former letter was soon styled, mainly by its adversaries, Neo-classic, and seemed one of the many reactions or revulsions of that confused period—a reaction in particular against all the ideals for which Futurism stood.

A common programme often masks rather than reveals the character of individual writers, since emphasis laid on the voluntary, programmatic elements of art conceals that individual quality which can find expression only in the unconscious, involuntary substance of the work. For a long time only Cecchi and Baldini seemed really worthy of attention among the writers of the Ronda. Baccelli's recent novel, however, *Il Diavolo al Pontelungo*, places its author in the front of the group, if it is still possible to regard as a group that which may have been little more than a passing coincidence of polemic interests.

Through his laborious and tormented work as a critic of literature and of the arts, Emilio Cecchi has created for himself out of his very scruples and perplexities, a style fastidious and involved, delicate and at the same time vehement and has not been without influence on a whole generation of younger writers. His hesitating and tentative use of words, a way all his own of saying and unsaying, as if he were afraid continually of revealing and abandoning too much of himself, and were never quite sure of his own thought beyond that point which suggests a reasonable reticence; his disdain for clear and definite expression, as if words outworn by a long literary tradition could not reconquer their expressive virginity except through the most subtle and complicated alchemy; all these characteristics of his style are to be found, transmuted into fashions and mannerisms, in a good many of

the writers who began their career after the war; and as this stylistic attitude is similar, if not in its forms, at least in its roots and motives, to some of the recent literary fashions of France—one might say that Cecchi is in modern Italian literature analogous to Giraudoux—Cecchi's influence ends by merging with that of the younger French writers whose prose rhythms are inspiring a whole eyrie of half-writers and half-journalists of our own. As for Cecchi himself, that which gives its peculiar flavour to his style, that which in fact makes a true writer of him, is even that same inhibition which more often keeps him from writing: his best pages are to be looked for in his short essays and fantasies, pauses, as it were, and interludes in his critical labours, such as are collected in his *Pesci Rossi* of a few years ago, and in the *Osteria del Cattivo Tempo*, which is his last book (1927). Times like ours are great devourers of possible poets—where a watchful (too watchful) critical sense, and a vast experience of European literatures from the Greek poets to Proust and Joyce, produce, as is the case with Cecchi, such high exigencies, such an insatiable consciousness of aesthetic values, that every initial rhythm or music is broken and discarded even before it has had time to describe its parabola and be wholly itself. Cecchi's prose style draws its minute and many-coloured splendour from a multitude of fragments and remnants of poetry not realized as song, representing and testifying to this torment of inhibition.

Baldini, at least at first sight, is as confident and felicitous and open-hearted as Cecchi is tormented and laborious and reticent. Beyond Leopardi and his lucid and solemn, thoughtful and musical prose, he has more or less consciously joined hands with certain exquisitely polished but not entirely artificial writers of the seventeenth century, like Padre Daniello Bartoli and Lorenzo Magalotti, and, further back, with our story-tellers and minor poets of the late Trecento and of the Renaissance—in search of a style voluntarily simple and debonair; of a vision of life thoroughly Italian, provincial and discreet; shy of great words as of great thoughts; free from every excess both of virtue and of vice; epicurean in practice and delicately refined in the consciousness of its self-imposed simplicity. In such a vision of life as well as in certain formal aspects of his art, the immediate predecessor of Baldini is Alfredo Panzini—with Pirandello, one of the older men

who have found their way and their fortune in the last few years, issuing from that mediocrity which had been a seal upon the greater part of their literary life. Having kept faith with the old tradition and with the inheritance of Carducci, but in a minor tone, through the years and revolutionary fashions preceding the war, Panzini came at last into his own when that which in him was still nature and continuation, began to appear to the young as a conscious artifice and a reactionary innovation. This particular moment coincided for him with the full maturity of a mind naturally kind and candid and witty, in love with the smaller and humbler things of life, and capable of a pathos neither vast nor deep, but intimate and sometimes intense. Some of his books, like *Santippe* and *La Lanterna di Diogene*, belonging to this happy period, have endeared him even to unsophisticated readers. But his more recent work seems to reveal a kind of languor, as of a writer to whom his own style has become a model and a pattern; and the natural wit which was quite adequate to a narrow and provincial *milieu*, loses its flavour and becomes an affectation of naïveté when applied to that different and wider life among which his very fortune as a writer has brought him. Panzini is a characteristic instance of the *laudator temporis acti*, and the unaccountable behaviour of the girl of to-day, so different from that of the girls of his own youth, fills him with an indignation too insistent to conceal the traces of frustrated desires and vain regrets. Apart from these personal and practical elements in his art, elements of weakness and uncertainty, as are all desires not sublimated into a poetic vision, the later Panzini is more and more detaching himself from his original inspiration, and changing into a follower of the school which he himself inaugurated.

Baldini's work, like Cecchi's, though much more abundant, consists of but short essays and fantasies, which in his case however are not remnants or interludes of poetry, but poetry itself. There lives again in him, together with the style, the character also of the old Italian *letterato*, who addressed himself to his subject, ambitious of adorning it with every grace. You might say that for him no subject is imposed by internal necessity, no subject is intrinsic to him, and that between one and another of these short prose poems, of these plaquettes or painted tiles, there is no other relation than is given by a hand acquiring greater and greater skill; which, having stamped a given portion of matter with its impress, is continually

seeking new matter on which it may employ its dexterity. For a writer of this kind, the journalistic profession cannot help being harmful, since, as the reasonable exercise of a technical capacity makes it more expert and refined, so the excessive use tends to make it duller and blunter. Many Italian writers once professors are now journalists. But Baldini's war-diary, *Nostro Purgatorio*, and the two volumes containing his earlier essays and fantasies, *Umori di Gioventù* and *Salti di Gomitolo*, are well worth reading, and so is Michelaccio, his most ambitious work; a short novel which reminds one of *Bertoldo* by Giulio Cesare della Croce, the masterpiece of our folk-literature of the seventeenth century. Michelaccio embodies in a proverbial type of plebeian and unheroic epicurean, that vision of old Italian life to which we have alluded. Even this book however is substantially but a collection of detached fantasies, among which one at least is truly happy and unforgettable, the imaginary meeting of Michelaccio with Ludovico Ariosto on a journey through the Apennines.

While speaking of Cecchi and Baldini, and endeavouring to define the nature of their minds as also of their art, we seem to be occupied mainly with considerations of a formal, stylistic order. It almost appears as if in times of doubt and transition, a kind of division of labour should become the rule of literary life, some writers concentrating their efforts on the pure problems of expression, and working merely to create the means by which others, more fortunate or less tormented, shall actually succeed in expressing themselves. But no writer, after such adventures and experiments, ought to be accorded recognition unless the quality of his work shows that, either through assimilation or consciously, he has digested the fruit of these apparently sterile labours. In this light, the function of Cecchi, Baldini, and a few other such "experimental" writers will have been that of a generation which, appearing on the stage when the clamour and the blaze of the dazzling and high-pitched d'Annunzian performance were already waning, has tried to make itself heard and seen through a lowering of the literary tone and through the presentation of more humble, concrete, and intimate aspects of reality. Thus it happens that, while d'Annunzio is still the officially recognized Laureate of Italy, in these younger writers as well as in Panzini and in Pirandello, we meet with moral and literary tendencies thoroughly different from,

when not actually opposed to, the tendencies prevailing in the practical life of their country: and this is after all as it should be, since the practical world is a mirror receiving delayed and diminished images from the higher worlds of thought and poetry.

But at last, out of the circle of the Ronda, a book has come, a real book which is one of the most notable novels published in Italy in recent times. With Riccardo Bacchelli we associate an ambitious, laborious, sophistical recasting of Hamlet, published in the Ronda in 1919; and those Poemi Lirici of which I spoke in my last letter, minute and laborious also, and intimately unlyrical: quaint experiments in which the old Italian hendecasyllable, the most venerable among the living metres of European poetry, and therefore the one which exacts the greatest poetical energy in order to be made to live effectually, was decomposed and as it were loosened into its essential accents and, when not of purely descriptive and psychological prose, reduced to a kind of *vers libre*. These early attempts had been followed by other dramatic essays and by a volume of imaginative prose, *Lo Sa il Tonno*, in none of which however had we been able to discover a writer more than pertinaciously devoted to his art or one able to express his personality with an accent and voice indubitably his own. The Diavolo al Pontelungo is a long novel, the scene of which is laid partly in Switzerland and partly in Italy, around the figure of the aged Bakunin and the first internationalistic movements after the realization of Italian unity; and it is in manipulating such unexpected and uninviting materials that Bacchelli succeeds at last in reaping the harvest of a long and patient literary apprenticeship. With Bakunin and his young Italian friend and disciple Cafiero, a whole world of cranks and fanatics from all the ends of Europe, from the prisons of the Czars or from the barricades of the Comune, lives and talks and plots in a perpetual oscillation between wildest hope and darkest despair—Cafiero having devoted his entire fortune to an unsuccessful communist experiment and to Bakunin, its leader. The atmosphere of those grey, uncertain times, of that dawn of the long peace which was to be concluded in the *Dämmerung* of the great war, is caught with an alert and sensitive intelligence, and with an art capable of individualizing all its multiple and confused elements in a crowd of sharply defined personalities and characters. The deterioration of the ideal in the daily



uses of life is studied and represented against the idyllic background of Swiss landscape—a setting which constitutes a kind of continuous lyrical accompaniment to a story in itself sad and prosaic. But the whole first part of the novel is but a prologue to the second, in which Bakunin's voyage to Italy and the preparation and failure of the Bologna insurrection of 1873 are told. Being himself a Bolognese, Bacchelli is now truly at home and the characters which are already so clean cut in the first part acquire here a deeper relief, as if he had worked at them with love not only for his art, but with love for his native place, both intimate and knowing. The old streets and squares of Bologna, the interminable sunny highroads, the brown and the green fields, the rocky hills of Emilia and Romagna, the markets and the farm-houses; the politicians, the peasants, the women, the workingmen of a narrow and solid and difficult world swept momentarily by a storm of apocalyptic hopes; the sordid, comical, and tragical reality of things, contrasted with the magniloquence of abstract plans; all this makes of the second volume of the *Diavolo* a thing of life and colour in which poetry is no longer a mere background or accompaniment, but the soul of the story. The style of the first volume is unequal and certain lyrical descriptions of places and skies stand out against the plain, almost grey narrative; they have here adapted themselves, however, to the variety and succession of human and natural images, losing nothing of syntactic simplicity. It is a style which conceals a vast literary experience in its short rapid sentences; in its fastidious, though apparently careless, choice of words and constructions which though not deliberately archaic, are yet subtly suggestive of the air and feeling of Italy fifty years ago. Phrases like the following: "*La notte splendeva nell' alto cielo morbido e sereno fra le vecchie grondaie e fra le mura profonde come la pazzienza effimera degli uomini, che le aveva costruite,*" belong to the noblest Latin tradition but are not out of tune with this tale of humble facts. I should love to transcribe in their entirety some episodes of Bolognese life, in which the fusion of the word with the thing is complete, but shall content myself with attempting to translate this description of a typical couple from the underworld, caught at the moment when it makes its appearance on the scene of a semi-tragical riot.

"There looked on these happenings, with an air of condescension, a Bullo, that is a ruffian of the underworld of those times. Showy and well trimmed, he wore an apricot coloured swallow-tail, with trousers fitting tightly at the ankle and swollen in an infinite number of small folds at the hip, of a fashion which twenty years before was called Ypsilanti. He had at his neck a long and high lace tie; his waistcoat was dazzling with colours and with gold trinkets hanging from his pockets. Rings, genuine and false, covered his dirty fingers; he had a flavour of filth and of perfumery. The enormous silk-hat hung somewhat askance, with a knavish gracefulness, on his artificially curled hair. His fingers impressed a quick and careless rotation to a light, thin, Indian cane containing probably a blade capable of cutting a throat or snapping a back if properly handled. With him, and resembling him, in a crinoline sumptuous and out of fashion, covered with frills and finery from her ears and down her corsage to her satin slippers, was she who with her earnings paid for those stylish luxuries. But the chief ambition in the pompous elegance of a Bulla lay in her head-dress: it derived from old fashions abandoned by society; it summarized on that head a whole century in the history of hairdressing. She leaned on the arm of her protector and exploiter: all kinds of curls, of ringlets, of frizzles adorned her head and hung from her temples, on her cheeks, and from the nape of her neck to her shoulders which were fat, wide, and savoury. There was in them a taste of barbarity and of corrupt and degenerate exquisiteness such as belongs to lost races. The Bulla was shapely, still young, with her dark and troubled eyes full of cruel vice and of wearisome wickedness. Worn out and diseased, she was beautiful, of an infamous beauty, as all things are beautiful that have character."

RAFFAELLO PICCOLI

# BOOK REVIEWS

## HEAVENLY HARMONY

BENEDETTO CROCE, *An Autobiography*. Translated From the Italian by R. G. Collingwood. With a preface by J. A. Smith. 12mo. 116 pages. Oxford University Press, American Branch. \$2.

**I**N a preface to this slender book—published in 1918, new edition 1926, no English translation before Mr Collingwood's—Professor Smith says "it was a piece of good fortune for us that in 1915" Signor Croce "paused to look back and around and before in order to see clearly where he had come to stand." Our good fortune would perhaps have been better yet if Signor Croce had waited a few more years before pausing, for then he might have had time to assimilate, and have found occasion to mention, his marriage in 1914 to Signorina Adèle Rossi, *docteur ès lettres*. Something he says here about death rather whets one's curiosity to hear him on marriage: "My domestic life suffered a violent catastrophe and a profound breach of continuity by the earthquake of Casamicciola in 1883, in which I lost both my parents and my only sister, and lay buried for some hours beneath the ruins, injured in several places."

Except for this breach of continuity Senator Croce seems to have led one of our happier lives. The gods may approve the depth and not the tumult of the soul, but to a philosopher, when they wish him well, they send now and then just tumult enough to set his soul in motion. Nor is this the only sign that they have kept friendly eyes on Signor Croce. Many thinkers, once they have put their thoughts into a book, feel for a while that they shall have no more thoughts, ever, and are sad. He has been luckier. It was for example borne in upon him, while reading the proofs of his *Aesthetic*, "that this book, into which I imagined that I had emptied all the philosophy which had accumulated in my head, had in fact filled my head with fresh philosophy." Envidable, decidedly envidable, is the philosopher who has the widow's cruse on his shoulders.

Although this Autobiography—whose more hesitating Italian title is merely *Contributo alla Critica di Me Stesso*, which leaves posterity freer to finish the undertaking, if posterity can—is primarily a history of mental motion toward “the period of maturity or harmony between myself and reality,” and although it is short, it includes some successful school-days: “In the class-room I was always among the best performers,” an eminence due to the fact that “it cost me no effort to grasp and remember what I was taught.” Other prize pupils have been known to think the price paid for such eminence rather stiff. Signor Croce did not have to pay a price of this kind, for “in the rough-and-tumble of school life I found that those who had claws with which to defend themselves were always able to win respect.” In other words, still Signor Croce’s, “I was a spirited boy.” Was this reference to his boyhood suggested by a familiar sentence in the *Book of Wisdom*—“For I was a witty child, and had a good spirit”? Probably not. Probably a coincidence.

Later in life these claws, winners of respect and of self-respect, seem to have taken the form of logical power, an identification which may have struck one who is as fond of identifications as Signor Croce. At twenty-seven, “after much hesitation and a whole series of provisional solutions . . . after a whole day of intense thought, I sketched in the evening an essay which I called *History* subsumed under the general concept of *Art*.” In “the discussions to which it gave rise . . . I felt more than once that I had my opponents at my mercy.” Again in 1895, when “I broke off . . . my researches upon Spain in Italian life, and threw myself for several months, with inexpressible fervour, into the study of economics, of which till then I knew nothing,” the result surprised Labriola, whose “surprise was shared by friends of mine, economists by profession, who were thunderstruck to find themselves more than once overmatched in conversing with me; for I had a firm hold on fundamental conceptions and extracted their consequences with an uncompromising logic. . . .” It is pleasant to linger over the three words which are repeated in the above quotations, the words “more than once.” Nowhere else in this Autobiography are there as good examples of *meiosis*.

Logic has always been Signor Croce’s friend. It helps him to make short work of those who continue to assert, even after “the utter overthrow of Hegelianism” by “philosophy as the science of

spirit," that Hegel is the father of the science of spirit. "Clearly," as Signor Croce says, "it can have no father except its own author." And to logical power, I think, should be ascribed that which he ascribes to briskness and impatience: "For however conceited a philosopher is (and I have never been conceited, in spite of certain movements of impatience and a certain briskness in controversy which others may have mistaken for conceit) . . ." Others, as we know, are always mistaking some inferior substitute for the genuine article.

All things considered, I have only two things to say against this book. Though it describes the movement of the author's mind up to and into "harmony between myself and reality," it does not tell us how far, for the sake of achieving this desirable harmony, reality has consented to move. That a philosopher's mind should in such cases do all the moving, and that reality should do none, this strikes a reader as unfair and a little unlikely. I wonder why neither the unfairness nor the improbability seems ever to worry philosophic autobiographers? My other criticism is, I hope, of Mr Collingwood, for making his author say he studied economics with "inexpressible fervour." Can Signor Croce have admitted that anything can be both inexpressible and something?

PHILIP LITTELL

## THOSE UNKNOWN SINGERS

THE AMERICAN SONGBAG. By Carl Sandburg. 8vo.  
495 pages. Harcourt, Brace and Company. \$7.50.

MR SANDBURG has performed a very useful cultural service in assembling for us, in this hugely diverting volume, a vast array of what might be called American folk-songs and folk-tunes. Almost everything that one can think of is here. If there is a relatively small selection from the negro spirituals, there is, I suppose, sufficient excuse for that in the fact that these are easily obtainable elsewhere, and, on the whole, better known, because more frequently heard. For the rest, Mr Sandburg has erred, if at all, on the side of compendiousness. Some of these songs—in fact, a good many—are pretty “small beer”; with little value either as verse or as tune. One would willingly lose fifty or a hundred of them in exchange for the omitted *I’ve Been Working on the Railroad*, or *Grasshopper Sittin’ on a Railroad Track*. But omissions, in a work of this sort, are inevitable. And on the whole one must congratulate Mr Sandburg on his thoroughness: perhaps only finding fault with him for his inclusion of a group of Mexican songs, and a good many English ballads and popular songs (for example, *It’s the Syme the Whole World Over*) merely on the ground that they are popular, in America, and frequently sung. The criterion, here, seems to be a little awry. It would as well justify the inclusion of *Annie Laurie* or *Ach du lieber Augustin*. And if mere popularity is to be the criterion, why should one exclude such popular songs as are *not* anonymous—for example, the *Sewanee River*? These too, in effect, have become folk-songs; and reflect, as well as anything else, the *Zeitgeist*.

Nevertheless, Mr Sandburg’s compendium is extraordinarily entertaining. In a sense, it is a social document of brilliant, and perhaps horrifying, force. Here—as Mr Sandburg intimates in his preface—is America. Here are the songs of working-gangs, the songs of hoboes, the songs of jail-birds and dope-fiends, the songs of farmers and cowpunchers and railroad men, the “blues” of negroes. It is an America which Mr Sandburg loves: he makes

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this sufficiently clear in the somewhat sentimental prefatory notes with which he introduces each item. He dedicates his book, indeed, "To Those Unknown Singers—Who Made Songs—Out Of Love, Fun, Grief." These are the folk-songs and folk-tunes of a great democracy; and if one loves democracy, shouldn't one love the songs it sings? . . .

Perhaps one should; but in the face of the present evidence, to do so would tax one's generosity to the breaking-point. As pure entertainment, there can be no question about the value of this collection. If one is interested in the manners and customs, and the intellectual and emotional level, of the American masses in the period from 1840 to 1920, then one will find plenty of light on that subject in this huge book, and light of a paralysing intensity. Here is indeed a rich folk material, of a sort—and like all folk material it is racily suggestive of its time and place. But—may democracy forgive us—how crude it is! It is folk-poetry—and folk-song—at its lowest level. Its humour is coarse farce or burlesque; its pathos is the dreariest and most threadbare of sentimentalities. Its poverty, whether of language or of idea, is almost terrifying. One finds it difficult to conceive how the Anglo-Saxon, with his extraordinary genius for the ballad, and with a ballad tradition which is unparalleled, could descend to such ludicrous fumbblings as these. His gift of phrase, and of succinct emotional utterance, seems here to have abandoned him entirely. One has only to compare this folk literature with that of almost any other civilized nation to feel at once its abysmal spiritual bankruptcy. It is, in fact, a folk literature without genius.

No doubt many excellent reasons could be given for this. One is accustomed to falling back on the time-honoured notion that "there had not yet been time," and that the pioneer life was too hard to permit of any cultural amenities. Whatever the excuse, one must resign oneself to the fact. These songs are delightful, not because of any real excellence as folk art, but simply *because* they are crude. There are, of course, exceptions to this, notably among the burlesques. The tragic ditties of Cocaine Lil and Willie the Weeper, and such semi-burlesque pathetic ballads as those that compose the Frankie and Johnny cycle, are delicious, as long as one does not ask too much of them. And one can, moreover, discover in many of the cowboy songs or working-gang songs a note of genuine enough feeling: genuine, but not successfully expressed.



Eventually, one comes back to the curious circumstance that only in the negro songs has America produced a folk-literature of any real beauty. In these, one does find a definite genius, both for phrase and melody. The fact that the phrase is frequently nonsense makes no difference: the negro showed an instinctive understanding of the *emotional* values of his adopted language which his white rivals in the art of balladry have nowhere matched. And the same thing is true also of the tunes. Only in the negro songs do we find any profundity of feeling. Compared with the average negro spiritual, or even with some of the "blues," the best of these "American" ballads appear superficial, or tawdry, or mawkish, or simply cheap. They can be, and are, occasionally, very funny, with their characteristic laconic exaggerations or droll understatements: but as poetry they are almost nil. The tunes seldom rise above the mediocre, and are usually best when simplest. It is to be regretted that in a good many instances, in this book, these simple airs have been too elaborately "arranged." What is wanted is a good "running" accompaniment of the plainest sort.

CONRAD AIKEN

## INVESTIGATIONS

THE REVOLUTIONARY SPIRIT IN FRANCE AND AMERICA. By Bernard Fay. Translated from the French by Ramon Guthrie. 8vo. 613 pages. Harcourt, Brace. \$5.

AMERICA AND FRENCH CULTURE: 1750-1848. By Howard Mumford Jones. 8vo. 615 pages. The University of North Carolina Press. \$5.

TO indicate the differences between these two books is not to disparage one or uplift the other, for they are both works of exceptional merit. They differ in scope, in purpose, and in method; but together they form a contribution to a study which remains to be made in completeness—the study of the sources of the American mentality and psychology. I am aware of the existence of many books indicating our debt to Greece, Italy, Hungary, Samoa, and other places; most of these content themselves with telling us that forty-six per cent of our inventors are of Finno-Ugrian stock and therefore we owe our inventiveness to the Finno-Ugrians. What has been needed is a study in the sources of American habits of mind.

I have elsewhere carried on a small and, I hope, not tedious propaganda for a survey of these sources. Not to involve it in current controversy, it may be stated in this way: the people of the United States display characteristics *a*, *b*, *c*, and *d*. Then the questions to be answered are: Do *a*, *b*, *c*, and *d* fail to occur in other countries? Are they natural developments in the American environment? Or are they developments of qualities *m*, *n*, *o*, and *p* which we find in Turkey, France, and Denmark? In the last case, did *m* develop into *a* because of specifically American factors (and what are they?) or was *m* fatally meant to become *a* in the course of time, is *m*, in fact, already on its way to becoming *a* in the country of its origin?

When Disraeli accused the European of the nineteenth century of confounding comfort and civilization, he said, specifically, what Europeans always say of the American of the twentieth century. This suggests that the crass materialism of America ought to be analysed. First, does it exist? Second, is it exclusively American? Third, if it can be traced to the post-Napoleonic era in France and

to the economists of the Manchester school in England and to the British industrialists of the first half of the last century and to the scientists of all Europe in the second half, what are its specially American features? And are these American qualities only the foreordained end of European materialism, arrived at a little more rapidly in America, are they showing themselves in Europe, or have they received a special impress from us? The same process ought to be applied to our ideas of liberty, our practice of censorious prohibition, our belief in speed, publicity, size, the sanctity of institutions, the sacredness of the American mission to make the world democratic, and all the other elements in our credo. It might even be applied to the Mencken-Nathan version of the credo where, I know by experiment, the result would be disastrous.

I suggest these researches because the amount of loose talk now being heard about the Americanization of Europe is a menace—possibly not a direct menace to peace between us and Europe, but certainly a peril to those friendly intellectual relations which civilized Americans always count on. It is quite possible that it is our destiny to ruin Europe and in that case investigation will reveal to Europe precisely the elements in the American character which they have most to fear; and it is also possible that it is our mission to regenerate Europe, and here again knowing what is American will help us. There is an alternative. Perhaps America ought to become infinitely less dependent upon Europe than it has ever been, to create its own standards, its own philosophical habits, its own arts. In that case we ought to be alarmed over the centuries during which America has been Europeanized and ought to cast out these alien elements. The knowledge we shall gain from our researches can be put to many uses. The one I think of is rather abstract. We shall simply know what America is and what Europe is.

The Franco-American relation at the time of the two Revolutions is a perfect subject. Dramatically we have Lafayette and Rochambeau aiding the rebel arms on this side, and Franklin at Court, Thomas Paine elected to the Convention on the other. M Faÿ's work is a study in inter-relations, in the development of that body of doctrine which held the emotions of Europe for half a century. The two countries dazzled one another; M Faÿ is dealing with a love-affair of the first rank, an affair which resulted in a liaison and ended in a rupture with disappointment on both sides. It is an amazing connexion with a Quaker as the middle term between Vol-

taire and Robespierre and an Indian as the link between Rousseau and Chateaubriand. Mr Jones who began with the idea of studying the reception of French literature in America during the Romantic Period was compelled to make the vast preliminary study he has now published because the connexions are so intricate and minute; M Fay, studying moral and intellectual relations, is compelled to call in literature, elopements, and political scandals.

These books might serve also as a guide to internationalism of a sort which neither statesmen nor patriots need fear. The idea of the rights of man and the idea of democracy against royal prerogative, were concentrated in France—the sources were in many lands; so it was France which stimulated the American colonists to the first political expression of these ideas. Yet America turned against the French Revolution in time and what M Fay calls “the great schism” followed the spiritual unity of the two countries. To the austere conservatives of the 1800’s, France was a menace and Jefferson, the upholder of French notions, a traitor; yet America was not swept away—it held to its own philosophy even after the French Revolution had carried that philosophy to an entirely French conclusion. And, to take a parallel case from Mr Jones: “. . . when Jefferson brought back from Paris a fastidious taste for French wines and cookery, Patrick Henry denounced him on the stump as a recreant to roast beef—one who ‘abjured his native victuals’.” But the American cuisine never became wholly French and a taste for French wines remains the symbol of an entirely proper internationalism, one which is willing to allow the superiority of other countries in certain respects and wishes each country to develop its best qualities without hindrance. The internationalism which civilized people fear is that of the *wagons-lits*. The great expresses run from Calais to Constantinople and in the dreadful day to come the food will be identical on every day of the trip, identically bad.

I fear that I have given a wrong impression of the two books I am reviewing—since I have said little of their actual content and manner. They are, in themselves, significant works; they have scholarship, construction, vividness; their special subjects are of the highest importance. But I cannot help feeling that the questions they suggest are even more important. I think of them both as pioneer work in an analysis of America.

GILBERT SELDES

## GETHSEMANE

THE LETTERS OF VINCENT VAN GOGH TO HIS BROTHER. *With a Memoir by his Sister-in-law, J. van Gogh-Bonger. Illustrated. Two volumes. 8vo. 554 and 646 pages. Houghton Mifflin Company. \$15.*

THERE are certain agonies that are too much for human nature. The soul rebels. It is impossible to pile pain upon pain—at a certain point the victim loses consciousness—and even a Lord High Inquisitor desists. In art these excesses of tribulation seem unaesthetic just for that reason—that they are not measured to the human standard. I shed tears, years ago, at the reading of James Stephens' extraordinary little study of starvation in the Dublin tenements<sup>1</sup> but they were not, I confess, so much tears of sympathy with the tragedy depicted as anger at the author for daring to reveal such a flaw in the thing we call life. One such horror seems to deny God. I recall very well leaning back in my chair for a quarter of an hour going through a process of deliberately stamping the story off my brain before daring to rise again to confront the world.

Just such a feeling of repulsion came over me when reading the Van Gogh letters. One of them in particular was so heart-breaking I had to put the book aside for a while, postponing the little summary I intended making of them.

The main facts of the miserable life I already knew. I had seen the paintings and knew them to be great. I had read a number of biographic and other essays, some of them for and some of them against the artist. Those that were "against," enlarged upon the insanities, upon the sordid background to the life, and finally upon the shocking episode at the very end, when the wretched Vincent, in an aberration, sliced off one of his own ears and sent it to the Magdalen of the village where he lived. These things proved the art to be bad, it was held. In reality, and as usual, it was the

<sup>1</sup> As originally published, *Hunger* by James Esse; now reprinted as one of the stories by James Stephens, which comprise the volume, *Etched in Moonlight*, 12mo, 199 pages, The Macmillan Company, \$2.50.

new way of presenting truth that shocked these critics. Intense sincerity in any art is sure to scandalize the small-minded but it is seldom that the Philistines alight so quickly as they did in this case upon biographic data so calculated to confirm them in their notion that Van Gogh was a bad man and therefore a bad painter. For that matter, the sensational items that were noised abroad were disconcerting enough in all conscience to those who admired the pictures; but they who judged them with their eyes and shut their ears to gossip, triumphed in the end over the rabble. Vincent van Gogh was a great painter and it now appears he was extraordinarily good as well. Even the late Count Tolstoy could accept this art on his own terms of "morality first" and painting afterward. Not that I am a Tolstoyan. On the contrary, I find it easier to judge morals by aesthetics than to judge aesthetics by morals.

Vincent, apparently, was doomed from the beginning. These two volumes of letters to the beloved brother Theodore are vividly revealing, and in the earliest accents there is something troubling to the sympathetic reader who already knows he is peeping into the secrets of a genius. Vincent was too simple, too honest, too undeviatingly attached to his own inner guide, to cope with a world that is built upon compromise. Born into a poor clergyman's family, and breathing naturally in the pious atmosphere of his simple home, he at first thought to be a clergyman himself. Difficulties at once announced themselves. Vincent had practically nothing but what little he had he straightway gave to the poor. He had an overwhelming pity for the poverty-stricken miners and wished to consecrate himself to aiding them. His spiritual advisers were horrified by such wholesale Christianity. "A person who neglects himself so," they found, "could not be an example to other people." Rejected by the clergy, there followed a long period of distress, during which, and vaguely at first, his true vocation made itself felt. With ten francs in his pocket he undertook an expedition to Courrières, the dwelling-place of Jules Breton, whose pictures and poems he admired, and whom he secretly hoped to meet, in some fashion. But the newly built studio of Breton looked inhospitable and he lacked the courage to enter. Discouraged, he set out upon the long journey home. His money being spent, he slept in the open air or in hay-lofts. At times he managed to exchange a drawing for a piece of bread but there was so much fatigue and hardship that his health ever afterward suffered. Once definitely committed to being an artist,



however, his mental serenity returned and never again did he doubt his calling. "Everything changed for him," he wrote, but that it was still the old Vincent, deeply concerned with suffering humanity, is apparent in another line: "And in a picture I wish to say something that would console as music does."

But by this time the torments were loosed in earnest. No one believed in him comprehendingly, save the brother Theodore to whom the letters went; and he had extraordinary need for comprehension and love. On the contrary everybody interfered with him. All were sceptical as to his talent, and indeed the little drawings that accompany the letters are not the sort that bowl people over. They are awkward and uncouth, like Vincent, and the best that may be said of them is that they are earnest. In particular, there was a man named Tersteeg, an art dealer, who lost all patience with him, rebelled at the weekly drain on poor Theodore for fifty or one hundred francs, and finally poisoned Anton Mauve—the one artist that Vincent had impressed—with distrust. This man Tersteeg was doubtless an honest enough individual but to Vincent he seemed a demon. The horrid part of the affair is the realization now that nine out of ten ordinarily intelligent people would act precisely as he did in similar circumstances. The climax arrived when Vincent, living in a hut, upon a pittance supplied by his brother, took up with a young woman of low character who had been acting as his model, and gave her domicile. This supplied the finishing touch for Tersteeg and Mauve. The letters in defence of his action, by the unfortunate artist, are among the most moving in the annals of art. The young woman, it seemed, had been abandoned, pregnant, to gain her living on the streets as best she could. She was as miserable as Vincent and he saw no inequality where Christ would have seen none.

When he asked Mauve to come look at his drawings, the latter said: "I will certainly not come to see you. All that is over," and then added, "You have a vicious character." . . . "I turned around and went back alone, but with a heavy heart because Mauve had dared to say that to me. I shall not ask him to explain it, neither shall I excuse myself. And still—and still—and still—I wish Mauve were sorry for it."

It was at that point I laid aside the letters for a while.

HENRY McBRIDE



## BRIEFER MENTION

**JUGGLER'S KISS**, by Manuel Komroff (12mo, 288 pages; Boni & Liveright: \$2.50) swings back and forth from philosophic fantasy to romantic realism in obedience to no law save the author's own magic. Pages which suggest Conrad merge without warning into pages which harmonize with Joyce; Mr Komroff reveals a temperamental kinship with many minds without blurring the outlines of his own poetic originality. Out of bizarre fragments he has built a beautiful pattern of story—the pattern of another Peer Gynt.

**OVERLAND**, by Dorothy Richardson (12mo, 240 pages; Knopf: \$2.50). In this, the tenth volume of Miriam Henderson's *Pilgrimage*, we accompany her to a hotel in Switzerland and are there participant with her in a thousand sensitive insights. Miss Richardson is Victorian in sentiment and errs frequently in style, but where else do we find so dedicated a reverence for the implications of each passing moment, so scrupulous an attention to every tap of experience sounding outside an ear always attuned for such messages?

**THE GREAT DETECTIVE STORIES, A Chronological Anthology**, compiled and edited with an introduction by Willard Huntington Wright (12mo, 483 pages; Scribner's: \$2.50) has an exceptionally fine introduction, which includes a running history of the development of detective fiction (stories and novels—the editor holds that detective novels are not fiction, strictly, but riddles in fictional form) and an analysis of the elements in the type. About half of the stories are disappointing; they are not detective, but mystery fiction—in which detectives do not detect, but are passive while secret passages are revealed to them or other accidents betray a crime. Among the devices which, according to Mr Wright, are “no longer used except by the inept or uninformed author” he lists “the phonograph alibi” and mentions two notable writers who have used it. Neither of these writers, by a coincidence, is S. S. Van Dine, the author of the Philo Vance stories, who uses the device and, Mr Wright ought to know, is neither inept nor uninformed—or at least is not uninformed.

**FROM GALLEOHER TO THE DESERTER**, by Richard Harding Davis, selected with an introduction by Roger Burlingame (12mo, 733 pages; Scribner's: \$2.50) is a feast of fiction for those who still have an appetite for the old-fashioned short story diet. Davis belongs to the pie-for-breakfast era; to read him one must have a stomach for the substantial. His plots are solid and warm-blooded, and his handling of his materials is spirited and observant. He has left behind a splendid array of quick-moving yarns, significant of the times in which he wrote, despite the fact that his style begins to appear more or less antiquated.

BALLADS OF ALL NATIONS, translated by George Borrow, A Selection, edited by R. Brimley Johnson (8vo, 342 pages; Knopf: \$5). Mr Brimley Johnson's introduction to this selection is entirely free from any attempt to over-estimate the literary quality of these translations by the author of *Lavengro*; some of which certainly do, as the editor admits, sink into very rough doggerel; but more perhaps might have been said in illumination of the temperamental psychology of this strange, wayward, conceited genius. Borrow's peculiar *penchant* for the rough-and-tumble aspects of romance is curiously betrayed here in the immense superiority of his Scandinavian translations over all the rest. After the Scandinavian versions the Gypsy Songs, as one might have expected, strike the most poetical and vivid notes.

ENGLAND RECLAIMED: A Book of Eclogues, by Osbert Sitwell (8vo, 99 pages; Doubleday, Doran: \$2). The Sitwells are so confident, secure, and complete in their family relationships that compliments or scorns from the outside world are alike indifferent to them; so much so, that if an outside admirer were to say, apropos of this new book, *England Reclaimed*, that it makes Osbert the Pope of modern times (Alexander Pope naturally; not Pius X) one of the other Sitwells would be sure to reply, if they replied at all, "Why drag in Pope?" . . . But Sitwells apart, there really is, in this Osbertian blend of lofty condescension and intimate admiration of the lower Victorians, something that is delightfully bewigged.

MIN-YO: Folk-Songs of Japan, selected, translated, and with introduction by Iwao Matsuhara (illus., 16mo, 227 pages; Shin-Sei Do, Tokyo: price not given). These songs—with introductory classification and a word as to composition—are presented in three versions; English, Japanese, and an English phonetic equivalent. Certain songs are, as English rhyme, not quite satisfactory, but the collection as a whole leads one to reflect that compression, mastery of the single tone, of the muted tone, of silence, are cardinal accomplishments.

THE JUDGMENT OF FRANÇOIS VILLON, A Pageant-Episode Play in Five Acts, by Herbert Edward Palmer (8vo, 143 pages; The Hogarth Press: 25s). Mr Palmer's preface reveals an admirable devotion to the personality of Villon and evidence of much industry in the assembling of "documents." The dramatic elements in this stirring theme are, however, so overlaid by that swashbuckler kind of pseudo-antique bravura, popularly supposed to represent the *argot* of the epoch, that they lose all simple, human appeal.

Old Calabria, by Norman Douglas, with special introduction by the author (16mo, 440 pages; The Modern Library: 95 cents) possesses that undiminished freshness so essential to the long life of a book of travel. One is indifferent to the fact that what these pages describe may have changed in the intervening years, since time plays no part in the zest with which one partakes of the writer's wit and insight. Better the ripe wisdom of a Norman Douglas than the green manifestoes of a Mussolini.

**PREFACES, INTRODUCTIONS, AND OTHER UNCOLLECTED PAPERS**, by Anatole France, translated and with foreword and notes by J. Lewis May (8vo, 235 pages; Dodd, Mead: \$2.50). The very reaction proceeding from Dada-ist and Sur-réaliste quarters against the Olympian "irony" and the detached "pity" of Anatole France provokes a counter-reaction in the reader's mind as he peruses this collection of characteristic fragments. The whole life-culture of the epicurean sage can be skimmed in these honeyed morsels. His patronizing interest in Hugo and Stendhal, his vibrant devotion to Renan, his shame over his "patriotic" lapses at the beginning of the war, his humanistic ideal of a United States of Europe, his sad Lucretian vision of our dismaying astronomical predicament, and his roguish championship of a Theocritean voluptuousness as man's wisest retort to an unsympathetic universe, all are represented in these pages.

**THOMAS HARDY**, by Lascelles Abercrombie (12mo, 196 pages; Viking Press: \$2). Death has a way, very often, of pointing public opinion, and the general insistence, at Hardy's death, that he was great among the poets, must certainly have stayed Mr Abercrombie's pen had he been writing then—but he wrote before that moment of illumination. . . . Mr Abercrombie has a fine intellectual approach to the novels but the excess of his reason stands between him and the quality that has to be felt rather than measured in the poems. Nevertheless he does see that *The Dynasts* is great, but thinks it is its greatness as a whole that overcomes the prosody of the lines. Mr Abercrombie will live to give, since after all he is intelligent, less grudging praise to this great epic.

**FRANCIS THOMPSON**, *The Poet of Earth and Heaven*, by R. L. Mégroz (10mo, 288 pages; Scribner's: \$3.50). Mr Mégroz is evidently one of those persons, more frequently met with, alas, in England than in these States, who constantly carry books of poems in their pockets to consult at every convenient moment. He has a consummate knowledge of Francis Thompson and has burned the midnight oil in quest of other poets as well. His book will please students greatly but may not be for the general. . . . This, too, in spite of the fact that it lacks consecutiveness and that the main argument is difficult to follow. In fact it is not certain there is a main argument. But it leaves even the Thompson enthusiast with an increased opinion of his poet's powers.

**EDMUND BURKE**, by Bertram Newman (12mo, 348 pages; Lincoln MacVeagh, The Dial Press: \$2.50). This well-balanced little book supplies a need often poignantly felt by our less erudite reader; the clear statement, namely, of what might be called "the philosophy of conservatism." Recent events in Russia and the Orient throw into significant relief the peculiar "paradox" of Burke's position, his hatred of rationalistic Jacobinism, and his appreciation of the ancient cults of India. Mr Newman, while quoting aptly from his speeches, never loses sight of that deep metaphysical idiosyncrasy, "true to its ground but changing its front," which gives to Burke's doctrines something of the flair for the irrational unconsciousness of organic cultures which we admire in Spengler.

**SIR CHARLES SEDLEY, 1639-1701**, by V. De Sola Pinto (8vo, 400 pages; Boni & Liveright: \$6). That Charles II followed Cromwell makes all the difference in the world. Had he preceded him we should regard him as a moral leper sans excuse. As it is, his license passes as a natural reaction against repression. So, too, Sir Charles Sedley, the gay king's gay friend. It was all just high spirits! And unquestionably he was always the gentleman. There is something in that, is there not? And he undoubtedly reformed and trod the straight and narrow path towards the end and it makes exceedingly pleasant reading. And he was quite a good poet, too—for a gentleman!

**EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON AND THE ARTHURIAN LEGEND**, by Lucius Beebe (8vo, 30 pages; Dunster House Bookshop, Cambridge, Massachusetts: price not given). There is an adulation of Edwin Arlington Robinson's poetry in this little brochure which is commendable, but not infectious. The poet's unblushing alterations in the events of the Tristram Legend, contrasted with the more traditional handling of Malory, Tennyson, Swinburne, Arnold, and Hardy, are not set down as explicitly and circumstantially as one could wish. There is no reference to the mythological aspects of the Arthurian cycle as are suggested by the Welsh Mabinogion; and the references to the poet's personal philosophy are too vague to be illuminating. Admirers of the psychological-analytical method of revising old romance will find little here to focus or clarify their enjoyment; while the unconverted will remain hardened in their prejudices.

**MY LIFE**, by Isadora Duncan (8vo, 359 pages; Boni & Liveright: \$5). Though confession may be good for the soul, it is difficult for one who has lived for many years on the front page of newspapers. The awareness that she was always "good copy" guided the pen of the autobiographer, displacing sincerity with artfulness. Episodes which may have been beautiful in reality are rendered tawdry in the telling; instead of the figure of a great artist there emerges the effigy of an Elinor Glyn heroine. The impulsiveness and the restless energy which made Isadora Duncan a world-renowned artist are reflected in these chapters, but something finer and more fundamental remains unexplained.

**DISRAELI: A Picture of the Victorian Age**, by André Maurois, translated from the French by Hamish Miles (8vo, 379 pages; Appleton: \$3). Adjustingly and as he feels justly M Maurois has set his garland above "this sad and clever face;" if it is not a saint's halo, and M Maurois says not, it is a species of crown. We are glad to have been acquainted before with those not congenial to M Maurois's temperament—Gladstone, Sir Robert Peel, and the Earl of Derby—but we rejoice that our old favourite, who was possessed not only of charm but of greatness, should be fortunate in his biographer. The entertainingly and perfectly fused excellences of the *Life* are indelible. "Wizardry and power," "gratitude," the "symbol of what can be accomplished, in a cold and hostile universe, by a long youthfulness of heart"—these are Disraeli.

## THE THEATRE

**M**ORE puzzled than excited or annoyed by the theatre last month, I have to note again that the movies when they are good are extraordinary. The good one of the moment is *THE CROWD*, directed by King Vidor who is developing a purely cinematic technique in accordance with the American temper and using European methods, so often superior in intelligence and weaker in execution, in just the right way—as instigations to his own inventiveness and creativeness. *THE CROWD* has some weak and vulgar moments; but it has extraordinary tact, emotion, and control of the medium. As a contrast, there is *THE LAST MOMENT*. The sponsors of the first showing of this film associated it with *Léger* and *Comte de Beaumont* and *POTEMKIN*; the director had also seen *CALIGARI*. The scenes in the artistic manner of the films were therefore largely imitative; and the rest—the skilful running off of sequences, the business of keeping the story alive, the presentation of things through movement, were all pretty badly done. The story was inflated and silly. I regret this because it is the work of an amateur who has managed to interest professionals without having to sacrifice anything to them. Mr Paul Fejos wrote the story and conveyed it to the film; and it wasn't good.

The *Movie Makers* magazine has recently published a few stills of an amateur production of *THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER*; they are entirely remarkable. Readers of the fine type on certain pages of this magazine will recognize the name of one of the responsible creators of this film; and everyone interested in the movies will hope that somewhere the whole film will be shown.

About my bewilderments: there is Miss Zoe Akins' new play, *THE FURIES*. A whole act is charged with the lushest language I have ever heard from the stage, Miss Estelle Winwood delivering speeches composed entirely of similes and metaphors without image or emotion behind them. At the end of this act Miss Laurette Taylor enters carrying lilies for no reason whatever and when she gets disentangled from her flowers, her dress, her hair, and her lines, gives a rather exceptional portrayal of an excited woman. At that point the play swings into a murder mystery which is carried through the second act, and quite well, too. For Miss Akins is

actually a dramatist. The mechanics of casting suspicion which is nearly always a broken alibi with insinuated motive, is here emotional; the spectator *imagines* the various suspects as murderers. Having done this, Miss Akins shuts up various principals in a room on the forty-second floor of an apartment house and creates an entirely off-stage character who indicates madness by playing the Liebestod on the violin (it may be an erratic fancy, but it seemed to me that the fiddler was accompanying herself on the piano) injects an unnecessary strain of lunacy into the composition of the murderer, and ends with suicide and last-minute rescue. Miss Taylor, listening to the murderer's avowal of love, was quite marvellous. The play had interest and thrill—and was so cluttered with unnecessary characters and highfaluting language that the whole meaning is just this side of zero. A real instinct for the theatre has been corrupted by an equally real instinct for tosh; I only wonder why the first hasn't been able, in many years, to destroy the second.

Further questionings: *OUR BETTERS* was revived. There seemed to be no special reason, since it is one of Maugham's second-best plays and the subject (expatriates and light adulteries) has staled. But if revived, why bother to change the tone from the slashing bitterness of the original to a complacent comedy? Miss Ina Claire did the comedy very well and Miss Constance Collier played in farce opposite her. The whole thing lacked importance; and merely to keep my head above water, I note that *THE COMMAND TO LOVE* also lacks importance and is an extremely clever and amusing piece of business with new and devious twistings of the triangle theme, and apparently not so frank (or suggestive) as it was when it was first produced.

I gather, incidentally, that there were threats against this play and it underwent revision to avert a padlock. This is interesting because *MAYA* could not be revised and *MAYA* had to close because if it didn't, the Messrs Shubert, who were not interested in the play, would have to suffer a dark house for a year. The Actor-Managers took a very dignified and decent line; the Shuberts were honest about their apprehensions; and everybody came off well except the authorities who blundered into the statement that the subject of prostitution *per se* was unavailable for dramatic treatment in New York City. Here, it seems to me, is a wide gap in the armour of censorship. I do not know whether the owners of a play which had



to stop can seek redress; but I am sorry that some way was not found to bring the business to court, to fight it out on the single question whether *any* subject can make a play improper. For obviously if it can, infidelity, incest, murder, theft, and eventually flirtation will follow. I confess that I did not think the censorship situation could get any worse than it was last year when the failing courage of managers gave over so much to the enemy; but it has become worse. It has become intolerable; and there seems to be no active intelligence left to fight it.

Some years ago I wrote that when the compass pointed due north, Mr Florenz Ziegfeld would be found comfortably sitting on the top of the world of musical show production; some months ago Mr George Jean Nathan (who recognized the impresario's virtues while I was still spelling out my Croce) was heavily quoted in the papers to the same effect. And now Mr Ziegfeld has produced *THE THREE MUSKETEERS*, as lavish and as dull a light grand opera as I've ever seen. The production has all the skill which made the *FOLLIES* so grand; but the material is heavy as lead. I recognized grand opera instantly when a tenor sang that "Love is a chan For roman ", as it is the duty of all operatic singers (and concert vocalizers) to cut off final consonants and generally make English words unintelligible. Mr Friml's duets and trios had skill, there were some pretty good tunes; but in a first act which ran for nearly two hours, the notable things were the good comedy of Lester Allen, the sickly *matinée-idol* posturings of Dennis King, and the general imitation of the worst of grand operatics. For guidance I note that if our producers of musical shows want to approach grand opera there are a few good models: *FALSTAFF*, *THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO*, *DIE MEISTERSINGER*; for style I suggest that even these three are best considered as light opera—I mean that Mr Ziegfeld could probably do better by them than most opera-house *régisseurs*.

The Albertina Rasch dancers performed a *ballet romantique* which was extraordinary because it used sixteen girls of exceptional tallness and used the lines created by their arms as an essential in the composed picture.

And in *RAIN OR SHINE* (Joe Cook's show) Russell E. Markert's Sixteen American Rockets performed a marvellous dance which is called a hand drill. The girls sat close together in a row; their



hands were gloved in green; and they moved them in unison, in various directions. That is all the dance held—and it was as surely dancing as any acrobatics. (Havelock Ellis has warned us not to limit dancing to the legs.) Or call it a drill, it remains one of the most agreeable things current on the stage.

Mr Cook has two supreme moments: one is the story of his single attempt to eat a dry cereal without milk and the lesson he learned; the other is his 1928 invention. Most of the rest of his stuff is good, but not superior to his earlier work, and in the second act he appears hardly at all. He remains one of the most ingratiating presences on the stage and I like to see him always; but prefer to see him more steadily engaged on the things he does best. To have Joe Cook and keep him in the wings seems to me pure swank.

Mr Robert Warwick was not a good choice for SHERLOCK HOLMES; but his unsuitability marked only the more clearly the goodness of the melodrama itself. It doesn't hang together; confront it with two or three questions and it falls to pieces. Yet it remains exciting. It lacks all the finish and smash of our current melodrama; but it has lived thirty years and asks few concessions to age. It needs the right man.

THESE MODERN WOMEN failed to please. I allow myself to wonder whether some of the critics who wrote most impersonally about it were not aware of the impersonation of a well-known New Yorker in the creation of the central figure and were as sternly regarding the play on its merits as they gave their readers to believe. I do not think that Mr Langner played fair with his protagonists; the modern woman especially was loaded down with old prejudices and with insignificant detail. The rattling off of pseudo- and actual scientific phrases may be a habit in certain *milieux*; I don't know. On the stage verisimilitude is better than accuracy, and this quality was lacking. Nevertheless, the play held dramatic interest in the first two acts; and if the conclusion hadn't been a little forced, the whole play would have deserved sober consideration—not sneers, which, it is my prejudice, do not constitute dramatic criticism. Mr Michael Gold (in connexion with the New Playwrights Theatre) has made the same point; having suffered, he knows.

## MODERN ART

**D**ELIGHTED to be associated in any way with Gaston Lachaise I willingly wrote a preface for the catalogue of sculpture recently shown in the Brummer Gallery and transcribe a portion of it here for the sake of a wider audience. I had discovered the work—as far as I personally was concerned—a dozen years before in a little show in the Bourgeois Gallery—and instantly felt it to be original and distinguished.

“What astonished me most in the little collection was a female nude that may or may not have been larger than life but seemed so. There was an air of exuberance, of exaltation, of expansiveness about the figure that meant only one thing. It represented an ideal. This ideal was not the usual one. In fact the usualness of the usual ideal had been for a long time the especial trait that critics in America had most contended with. This one had nothing to do with fashion, nothing to do with the sort of thing that is taught in schools. To eyes that had grown somewhat habituated to the platitudinous carvings of the day the Lachaise Woman was so different that at first she seemed a priestess from another planet than this. She must have been at least early-Egyptian, early-Arabian, or at least pre-Greek! But that was only at first. In a minute or two the strangeness disappeared, the authoritative satisfaction of the sculptor in his work made itself felt and a mere critic could see a beauty that though new was dateless and therefore as contemporary as it was ‘early.’ I left the gallery firmly convinced I had seen a masterpiece.

“Outside, on Fifth Avenue, the parade of fashion seemed unaware that anything of importance had occurred. The concession to the modes of Paris remained in full force. It did, indeed, make an effect of being permanently established. Could they whom I beheld, undoubtedly the élite of the land of the brave and the free, accept an idea of beauty that was unconcerned with the modes? Apparently they could not. I made as much of an outcry about my discovery as I could, but with no appreciable results. The new Woman was talked about in the studios with a certain

degree of respect but in the salons it was held that she was too fat. I even heard the term 'indecently fat' applied to her—and by an individual whom I had once heard praising the now expensive art of Lorenzo di Credi. Had he actually ever seen a painting by Lorenzo di Credi? Not really seen one or he would have remembered that mere amplitude of person is not and never was one of the cardinal sins. There are quite as many ample personages among the antique gods as meagre. But this new goddess was born too late—or too soon. Failing to meet the admirer with the wherewithal to put her in permanent form—she was still in plaster, poor thing—she was carted ignominiously back to the studio, there to languish among the cobwebs. . . . Lachaise himself had a success—with the artists. They all knew him, even the mediocre ones, to be rare. His contributions to the current exhibitions always elicited praise but that aspiring tendency of his to see things in the large was invariably frowned upon by patrons. The one artist among us whose visions towered mountingly in sizes comparable with our architecture was the artist New York chose to ignore."

That was, as I said, a dozen years ago. Give New York time and it generally "comes around." I expect her now to come around to the Lachaise Woman. I was immensely surprised when calling upon the sculptor just before the exhibition, to find this goddess that I had been writing about, there—and in the bronze, the shiny surfaces of which were prodigiously becoming to her. In the Brummer Gallery, a few days later, I saw that she had the same place and the same splendid light that belonged, only a few weeks previously, to Despiou's Grande Eve, and I rejoiced to note that she was entirely worthy of the association and could not resist the wish that she might follow that masterpiece to the Musée du Luxembourg. She would create a stir there, believe me! She is certainly creating one in New York. But just at the moment when it seems likely that she is to be accepted as a matter of course, Lachaise poses another Venus in the pathway of progressive New Yorkers, a Venus still larger and more stylized than the first one. She appears to float in the air, this large lady, who still in plaster, with legs outstretched, like a Pavlova, defies the laws of gravity. But she already has her admirers, myself included—for when I accept an artist I accept him—and "we" are already longing to

see her poised aloft in the air somewhere, all in gilt, defying the Philistines. In addition, there is something new for Lachaise, in this exhibition, a nude figure of a young man, in marble—quite the finest male nude that America has yet put to her credit. It is, in the first place, the American type of the period, the war period. There is something in the simple attitude of attention that has a sacrificial aspect. Every mother in the land, for instance, will see in him something of the young man she lately sent across seas. There is also the purity that was so much misunderstood in Europe! In spite of the capitulation to Col. Lindbergh they did make jokes about him over there. But thinking it over, we've decided the joke's not on us.

Yasuo Kuniyoshi applied to the Guggenheim Foundation which did not, however, honour itself by giving him an award. This little item may figure in the Kuniyoshi biography later on. It ought also to figure in the history of the Guggenheim awards. I think a committee that deliberately "passes up" a man like Kuniyoshi ought to be known for what it is. The sins of omission, in such an institution are significant, and should be listed. . . . Kuniyoshi now is in a position to smile at what at first seemed to him a misfortune. Since the decisions of the Guggenheim Foundation have been made known, his exhibition in the Daniel Gallery has occurred and it has been a pronounced success, financial and otherwise. His style is not one that wins collectors at first sight, it is too new and vigorous for that, but it grows upon acquaintance; and the enthusiasm of the amateurs this year was such that Mr Kuniyoshi, no doubt, will dismiss all thoughts of travelling scholarships from his mind henceforth. That was in fact the dubious element in the benefit that failed to materialize. It implied study abroad at a time when study at home is much more rewarding.

HENRY MCBRIDE

## MUSICAL CHRONICLE

THERE is cause to regret, in hearing the Oedipus Rex, that one has during the course of the year branded any other work as possessing more than passing interest. For unless some fresh and greater glow can be contrived which does not too much endanger the style, any previous enthusiasms must be felt to invalidate the present one. The sole possible procedure is lame, but necessary: first to insist that the earlier praises arose, to some extent, *faute de mieux*; to abjure, to become a new man. And next to admit one's discomfiture at lauding Strawinsky anyhow. On this second point we have the precedent of the voice of God itself—the audience. For they too, despite their obvious affection, applauded but little and sporadically, doubtless feeling the inadequacy of duck-talk to express gratitude for this solemn and corrosive work.

Igor Strawinsky's Opera-Oratorio, Oedipus Rex. The performance of this by the Boston Symphony in New York.

There is a mode of torment, most often accredited to China, whereby the victim is kept from relapsing into sleep by an incessant goading. Presumably, by even the subtlest and most economical of movements, one could come to induce in his man a state of fiendish exasperation, until the slightest tickle might cause him to thrash about, like some happily captured fish thrown upon the sand. The Strawinsky method of appeal was somewhat similar. The obsessive element of the music was continuous, maintained by an extreme shrewdness and parsimony in both repetition and variation. The power was not derived from the multiplication of the voices, nor from the bulk of the instruments; it was a thing of texture and form. The rhythmic effects were subtilized beyond perception—the great orchestral hiccoughs of the *Sacre* were gone, rhythmic changes residing not in the upheaval of the total mass, but in internal adjustments and timings. It is the brasses that are pugnacious and rousing; it is the woodwinds that are odd and unnerving—and to these latter instruments (where the *fortissimo* is almost an impossibility) the burden of the attack seems to have fallen.

Surely we may observe in this work the first clear crystallization

of what will be, if any, the new art. We feel this to such an extent that we should wish to hail the music as a standard even had we found it disappointing as sound, a position which we are emphatically spared. Here the production of art is made difficult, and no other kind of art, in our present weedy plenty, has a justification for existence. People presumably still search for some mechanism—Freudian, gymnastic, or anaesthetic—to loosen their utterance, forgetful of how many, how ghastly many, have found such. How can one, without humility that takes the breath away, still dare to peddle some tiny corner of sensibility, after an accumulation which the prowess of a Saintsbury and the years of a Jewish patriarch could not encompass? Who has found a metaphor, a new toot, that can proudly go and sit with all the other metaphors, the other toots?

A work such as this, written with a sense of stricter obligation, makes even the composer's own past seem irresponsible. It possibly clears away a considerable area of the artist's development, leaves him with new blank walls to stare at. It does provide its own intolerance. Here, the very readiness of colour, the range of possible sounds, have brought with them the duty of distrusting all such ubiquitous opportunity. We seemed to feel some element of the hushed, the thwarted—if we may mean by this not the difficulties of weakness or distress, but the prerogatives of superior understanding. For that sense of the impending, of overhanging fate which pervades the music—was it indeed the future of Aeschylus, or was it the constant admonition which the author had imposed upon his own methods?

The libretto (what we saw of it was the English translation of the Latin version of Cocteau's French original) was a mixture of extreme sophistication and—in keeping—mock clumsiness. It would be hard, for instance, to decide under which category we should place the blunt *résumé* of the plot as explained by the Speaker; or the indeterminate fluctuation in attitude whereby the story is sometimes told as a mere summarizing of another man's text and at other times advances in its own right. In its woodenness, it contains sufficient drama: Oedipus remains boastful at solving the riddle of the Sphinx, while the successive disclosures which are to entail his destruction accumulate about him. Thus, the mood of apprehension is built not upon surprise, but upon foreknowledge;



and as is natural to this procedure, a certain amount of dramatic irony is called into service.

In other matters, the satisfactions of the month were mostly of the retrospective variety. We think primarily of Toscanini, and—with Toscanini—of his conducting of Beethoven's Sixth Symphony. In this work, where loveliness is so husbanded, and hammered, and dwelt upon as to become magnificent, Toscanini discloses a wealth of effects which it would be disquieting to hear happen and vanish so quickly did we not have the naïve assurance that the same sequence could be repeated. . . . Maurice Ravel, conducting the New York Symphony in an all-Ravel programme, did little to champion the qualities of his own music. The Valse, which we had liked extremely under Mengelberg, was clearly tamed, leading us to wonder whether the composer might profit by a certain affirmativeness in his readings which is not present in his writings. . . . With the Philadelphia Orchestra, under Pierre Monteux, we heard Gabriel Pierné's Music Hall Impressions. Despite a certain night-light joyousness, with some "catchy" motives, the instrumental clownings of this piece, which had its *première* as far back as 1927, seemed quite obsolete. . . . And, imperfectly returning, we should include in such an enumeration the exalted playing of the fifth Handel Concerto Grosso, for String Orchestra, with which Koussevitsky had preceded his performance of the Oedipus.

KENNETH BURKE



## COMMENT

*My intentions are all directed to worthy ends, to do good to all and evil to none. And now let your graces judge whether a man who means this, does this, and makes it his only study to practise all this, deserves to be called a fool.*

Don Quixote

CERVANTES is not in need of being rescued from oblivion. Though he calls Don Quixote a legend as dry as a rush, destitute of invention, in a wretched style, poor in conception and void of learning, no one has agreed with him. Monuments such as the colossal Dulcinea to be erected at Toboso are evidence merely that a world going the opposite way declares his, admirable. With much patience Signor Unamuno remarks in his eloquent commentary:<sup>1</sup>

"The best listeners are the goatherds, accustomed to the voices of woods and fields. The others do not receive your words with inner silence and virgin attention; however you sharpen your explanations, they will not sharpen their understandings; not they."

In an age of philanthropy and self-entrenchment as squire to philanthropy, however, the co-operation of the knight and squire usefully suggest "for the comfort of our discomfort," "goodness and humanness." The knight's prowess was mystical—without thought of defeat or reward. While Sancho was crouching under Dapple for protection, or "awaiting death in its cruelest form, hunger," Don Quixote was at attention or composing a poem; "born in an age of iron, to revive in it that of gold," he was not sometime to rest in a silver coffin on seventy-eight crowns of khans and princes; or to outshine in death Jelalu-d-din, or the King of Ur. His

<sup>1</sup> The Life of Don Quixote and Sancho, according to Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra. Expounded with Comment by Miguel de Unamuno. Translated from the Spanish by Homer P. Earle. 8vo. 327 pages. Alfred A. Knopf. \$5.

courteously fraternal dying—with Sancho, the priest, the notary, the niece, the housekeeper, and the bachelor beside him, is conspicuously incomparable with the punctilio of the "hecatomb" and its arranged rows of wives, appropriately in attendance but without belongings of their own since "it was not their grave but the king's."

Don Quixote seems proverbial of extremes—the measure of impracticality; typical also, of right as more sovereign than rights. When the "short-winged and sharp-beaked" "domestic impediment of his heroism" asks her uncle why he should try to make himself out vigorous when old, strong when sickly, and able to put straight what is crooked when he himself was bent by age, he admits the body to be withered and the armour rusty. Put to the test, however, he exclaims, in defiance of "Panza"'s prejudice against an attack upon the twenty Yanguesans by a pair who were "not more than one and a half," "I count for a hundred." Sublime inferences are inevitable.

By the properties of the novel—courtly, confiding, Asiatically detailed yet "not swerving a jot from the truth"—the attention is enticed and involved in the mystery of a continuously imaginary verisimilitude, the smaller included in greater and the greater as Heine has said, like a tree of India. We are familiar with the intimidating sheep—the mighty Duke of Nerbia whose device was an asparagus-bed, and Brandabarbaran of Boliche armed with a serpent's skin and a gate of the temple which Samson pulled down; and with the funeral cortège amid "about a dozen of tall beeches," "not one of them without the name of Marcela written and engraved on its smooth bark"—the "twenty shepherds clad in jerkins of black wool, crowned with garlands, some of which were of yew and some of cypress," and the Lycidas-like hero; the flowers, the books and "great number of papers, some open and some folded," that "lay round him on the bier." And most important perhaps, is the exploit in which Don Quixote falls with drawn sword on the puppet Moors, decapitating, maiming, and demolishing. In every age there are regalia and insignia that are nothingness.

The humble grandeur which Don Quixote achieved through "good sense and good conduct," "modesty, liberality, courtesy,"

"chaste ears and compassionate deeds," has somehow acquired an angelic quality—akin to what Mr Henry McBride finds in the painting of El Greco—a "curiously lambent inner glow" that gives it "an unearthly impressiveness." The world has been unwilling to pay the tribute of imitation but has offered its admiration. In Unamuno's commentary, knight and squire signify love for humanity, its spirit and body; "not the two halves of a whole, but a single being viewed from either side." And this your graces cannot question, having read "the History of the famous Don Quixote de la Mancha, who in the opinion of all the inhabitants of Campo de Montiel, was the chastest lover and most valiant knight that had appeared in those parts for many years."

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